

editorial

information service

womanweb

In September the Women's Liberation Movement's first official national information service will go into operation in Leeds. A bi-monthly newsletter will be available at a cost of £3.00 a quarter to groups and £3.00 a year to individuals. The information centre will answer postal and telephone enquiries from women in the movement and those who don't yet know about it: on the action groups, resources and campaigns of the movement. The newsletter will publicise events, conferences, provide report-backs and keep up the flow of information and debate between different groups all over the country.

In building the women's movement we have always had to handle a double task — on the one hand we had to work out how to make the movement's resources public and available to isolated individual women, and on the other, how to keep up the level of communication between existing groups. At different times, one aspect has been more difficult than the other. For instance, when the movement was just beginning and the Women's Liberation Workshop set up a London office, there were only a few groups to co-ordinate. But daily the workers faced a barrage of phone calls. Enquiries about every aspect of women's lives, calls for advice and help which came directly from the many needs that women were discovering and starting to voice. It was heart-tearing, frustrating, not having the answers, knowing how much needed to be done, knowing we didn't yet have the resources.

Now, things have changed. There is hardly a single aspect of women's existence without a study or action group investigating or campaigning around it. So when we at *Spare Rib*, in the bustle and hurry of producing the magazine, get a call asking what stage the Anti-Discrimination Bill has reached in Parliament, or where the best place is to find women's plays for a Further Education drama class, at least we can rustle through some files, or ask each other "Does anyone remember where . . . ?" Because we know what the Women's Liberation Workshop office workers of 1970 didn't — we know that the relevant group or individual who can answer these questions *does exist*, somewhere. So gathering together the strands into a web of information has become a priority.

In 1972 the Leamington group made a brave attempt to set up an information service and newsletter, but this floundered through lack of money and publicity, and indifference — certainly from London groups already kept in contact with each other through the Women's Liberation Workshop newsletter. Now, once again, the initiative has come from women in the provinces to set up a workable national service, one which will not only solve communication problems for groups outside London, but which we can all benefit from.

Because, just as the woman isolated at home, for instance, feels little identity of her own, so we as a movement hardly know who

we are. To be able to look around and say with certainty "These are my sisters, they are doing this here and that there and in a year we have together won those things" — this is a great strength. Much of the work of Women's Liberation groups — from battling with a local authority for more and better nursery care to setting up women's therapy groups — has been so dispersed as to be invisible to all but those directly involved. All of us need to become acquainted with our achievements and keep ourselves informed about them and begin to assess them. A well-subscribed and supported newsletter would go some way towards this.

What women trade unionists are fighting for at work is clearer, less dispersed, and the traditions longer, yet it's often difficult to see how many struggles are going on nationally, and where support and solidarity could come from. Difficult, also, to see what other women are fighting for outside the workplace, to appreciate and draw strength from the sheer breadth of that fight. How many women's struggles at work might receive support from Women's Liberation groups if there was a constant flow of information about them? How many women trade unionists might put their weight behind women's struggles in the community if they knew about them?

Being in the women's movement may mean that we "carry a new world in our hearts", but the old one has its place in our heads. Faced with practical organising tasks, we often feel a certain inertia, an inability to take ourselves seriously. It's hard to remember that that new world has to be organised for concretely if its continuity and durability in a hostile environment is to be assured. The Leeds women responsible for the main work of the Information Service are doing just this, grappling with finance, constitutions, leases, administration, legal safeguards. Strictly limited functions of information and communication have been laid out for the service — it has no power to make policy for the movement. The workers will have their jobs clearly outlined by an office collective, and may be recalled by a monthly meeting which is open to all Women's Liberation groups. But all these carefully devised structures are useless unless women follow through in concrete ways the decision they made to give support to the service, unless they send lists of all groups and activities locally, subscribe, publicise the W.L.M.N.I.S. and be ready to send regular news.

Organising against women's oppression is such a vast affair that sometimes it has that quality found in dreams — a feeling of walking slowly and heavily forward through a swamp. No doubt the mud will be sucking at our feet for a long time yet. But sturdy projects like the Women's Liberation Movement National Information Service hold the promise of firmer ground for all of us to move on.

Send donations, subscriptions, address lists to W.L.M.N.I.S., c/o 24 Mexborough Drive, Leeds 7. □

Front cover: Some of the 20,000 who marched against James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill in London on June 21
Photograph by Chris Davies (Report)

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LETTERS LE

CHILDBIRTH

Letters in response to 'Childbirth' (Spare Rib No. 36) in which Valerie Charlton and Annette Muir criticised the medical profession's view of childbirth, the attitudes incorporated in pamphlets put out by the British Medical Association and the National Childbirth Trust, and looked at such questions as home versus hospital deliveries, natural childbirth and women's experiences of pain.

Do-it-yourself Delivery

Dear *Spare Rib*,
A more inspired approach to childbirth might be to centralise labouring

mothers in a nursing area, but to let the parent(s) and people of their own choosing deliver their own child(ren). If things got hairy, help would be close at hand.

Discussions at antenatal stage could be geared towards delivery and its complications and use of apparatus. Decisions on whether to have a natural or assisted delivery could be made unemotionally (and not as I experienced, in labour having an unwanted epidural pushed onto me when too weak to resist). In this way interfering 'experts' could be kept out of the way unless really necessary. We all know how to get pregnant, why shouldn't we also know how to deliver it, (or even

bury it, if it came to that).

On the subject of pain, I can only say that my experience of giving birth was very soulful. The combination of pleasure and pain both unbearably bearable, was totally new to me and I would not have missed either of them.

It may be necessary 'to suffer for anything worthwhile', or it may not be, why be so dogmatic? Each to their own. As for me, I take my biro to those well-read waiting-room magazines and add my own comments.

Love to you,
Linda Hatchard
London SW18

Hard Labour

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I liked the article on childbirth in No.36. The emphasis on the variety and validity of women's experience struck me as important. I'd like to add a few points.

My first child was born after approximately 30 hours of labour (not counting the first nine hours of 'little' contractions after the waters broke). What I felt so acutely during this long haul was that I was being worked to death by forces I had no control over. My serious application of psychoprophylaxis began to falter because of exhaustion and when I had hours of confusing transition (supposed to be a brief period in labour), I just wanted it over in any way. In fact I was knocked out and when I woke up started up again where I'd left off. In the end the actual delivery with forceps was nothing compared to the long struggle to get there, and my shock – and believe me it was shock – came mostly from the fact of literally being worked so hard by labour which *happens* whether you are in control, whether it 'goes well', or whatever. I think this idea of losing control is very important. My pre labour idea was that I could face pain, discomfort, etc. if I knew what was happening and was 'on top of it' or in control of myself. In my case labour was a whirlpool in which I was unable to consciously control how I responded or even ride out for all my preparedness. My consciousness of myself as a distinct person was tossed in and sucked under.

When I finally had this first baby my pain came from dreadful cramps in one hip joint because my legs were hoisted up in stirrups. When I tried to explain I was totally ignored. They assumed I was complaining about labour pains! In fact the doctor said to the students (oh yes, I had them feeling and standing around during the whole process), 'they always swear and shout at me but the next day they've forgotten it completely and before you know

it are lining up to have another one'.

I had another baby two years later, (without forgetting), and labour took in total about four easy hours. By the way, I really suffered from post-natal depression after the second 'easily' born child.

The other thing I wanted to raise was about home deliveries. In ideal conditions I guess every woman should have a choice of home or hospital but I tend to agree with the article that primary importance should be put on changing, improving and extending the facilities and attitudes in hospitals under the National Health. I had to insist on having a full eight day stay in the hospital after my second baby was born. I was determined to take advantage of being in the hospital to rest, get a few nights full sleep and not worry or feel guilty about *anything* at home. And my home situation is relatively supportive, secure and flexible.

With the exception of a few communes and women's houses, the home birth advocates, without actually saying so, rest their case on a 'happy family' base. Mum lies in her comfy, soft bed while loving, curious but considerate children, and adoring helpful father, and kind understanding midwife, home-helps, etc., quietly circle around and do all the housework, cook the meals, etc. The mother lets them take care of her and they are knit together *as a family* by this wonderful experience. Well – maybe.

But what's all the stuff we talk about in the women's movement about families not necessarily being such simple, happy units? What about guilt, tensions, etc. – do they all magically disappear? If we have criticisms of the privatisation of 'family life' and particularly of women's place both in day-to-day life and in the way women are presented as being *in families* – defined by them, why this glorification of the 'happy' family at childbirth?

Love,
Sue O'Sullivan

Castor Oil, Epidurals and Home Birth

Dear *Spare Rib*,
We were very pleased to finally find an article which attempted to discuss women's subjective experiences in childbirth, but we think you missed some vital points on the question of pain in labour.

Certainly doctors often underestimate and dismiss complaints from 'neurotic' women patients, but also, very often, they will administer analgesia or barbiturates indiscriminately to women in labour irrespective of their own individual needs and occasionally against their wishes.

There are other specific points we would like to take up:

It is *not* very dangerous to take normal amounts of castor oil to try and start off labour. It will only have an effect if the woman is ready to go into labour anyway. In fact castor oil, prunes, gentle love-making are all good things to try for women who, at full term, are going to be induced soon anyway, and would still like to go into spontaneous labour (always provided that the bag of waters has not burst).

We think you are wrong in assuming that the various methods of natural childbirth interpret pain in labour as a purely psychological phenomenon. On the contrary it is generally recognised that it is necessary to cope physically with the physical (probably painful) process of giving birth. In this situation, pain can be increased by physical tension and decreased by controlled relaxation. Fear and ignorance do play a large part in the anticipation of unknown situations which, as you say, can 'raise the level of anxiety and thereby the intensity of perceived pain'.

On the question of epidurals and other pain-killers, your article seems to give the kind of whitewash that is positively dangerous for a critical, sensitive Women & Health movement. A woman who has an epidural is virtually assured of a low forceps delivery which in turn leads to an increased risk of complications. Once intervention is begun, control is taken out of the hands of the mother and midwife; more intervention still becomes necessary — it becomes a doctor's procedure. Also you do not mention the possible harmful side-effects of epidurals, e.g. bad headaches which can last for days afterwards. It is important for women to realise that research on epidurals is only just underway and that in fact they may be serving unknowingly as research subjects.

There is a lot of evidence that pethidine and barbiturates given during labour do make for a sleepy baby. This can make breastfeeding extremely difficult and have a potentially very detrimental effect on the mother-child relationship. Many studies have shown the beneficial effects of immediate mother-baby contact, which is hampered by sleepy babies — and sleepy mothers!

Induction for reasons of convenience, even if all the parties are willing, can hardly stand as a valid procedure given the increased risk of distressed premature babies, and the number of mothers who don't have a chance to control their own labours because of the increased strength and frequency of the contractions.

You give a very distorted picture of home confinements by just quoting one case in which something went wrong and the mother had to be admitted to hospital. In the vast majority of home confinements, the woman is confident and relaxed in familiar surroundings, the birth is normal and in many cases shorter than hospital births (many women's labours stop suddenly when they go into hospital).

Holland has the lowest infant mortality rate in the world with 40% of all births occurring at home.

Maternal mortality, one of the few added risks of home births was 0.4 per 10,000 births in Holland in 1972. Also infection rates of mother and baby are much higher in hospital births.

Women should feel free to have their babies where they feel most secure. We in the Women's Movement should be backing a move towards home confinements for non-risk women (backed up by emergency flying squads) as part of the extension of women's freedom to choose. We must also give our wholehearted support to midwives who are gradually being undermined. The domiciliary midwives are gradually being phased out and soon all midwives will have to first be trained as nurses. This is not necessary and is detrimental to women. A nurse and a midwife are two different things. One sees three years of sickness and then learns midwifery. The other is trained to deal with primarily well women. The difference in approach is enormous. One has been trained firstly to assist doctors, the other has been trained to be a practitioner in her own right and is also a team member. In Holland midwives are not nurses and they are trained to handle many more complications in labour than English midwives. So surely the answer is not for more women to deliver in hospital but for midwives to learn to be able to do more.

Please, no more of your reactionary thinking, *Spare Rib*.

Yours in Sisterhood,
Cindy Harris,
trainee National Childbirth Trust teacher.
Marianne Scruggs,
trainee midwife.
Birmingham 13

National Childbirth Trust

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I was interested in last month's article and agreed with many of the points you made, but I feel you did not present a fair or adequate picture

of the work of the National Childbirth Trust. Although early teachers of 'natural childbirth' and 'psychoprophylaxis' believed that pain in childbirth is the result of the attitudes of the woman, you would not find this attitude prevalent among NCT teachers today. I am an NCT teacher and in my classes we do not avoid mentioning pain — rather I try to present a variety of ways of dealing with pain.

I try to emphasise that everyone has a different experience of labour, that some are more difficult to deal with than others, and that the kind of labour you'll have can't be predicted in advance. I offer the people who come to classes a number of psychophysical tools which they may or may not choose to use, along with whatever aids the hospital offers them. These tools are (1) conscious relaxation, which may be of use coping with many situations other than labour, (2) controlled breathing, a kind of occupational therapy, and (3) a distraction technique, e.g. counting backwards in sevens, to take one's mind off the pain.

Another important aid which a woman may choose to use is the support of a person she knows well (probably the child's father). One aim of my classes is to get these people involved so that they can give the best possible physical and emotional support. This is an important area in which men are becoming increasingly emancipated from orthodox masculinity.

In addition to this practical work I teach about hospital routine, medical terminology and common complications, because I believe that women have a right to understand what is happening to their bodies. I hope that (people who come to my classes) will feel more in control of the situation than they would otherwise have felt.

Granted that paragraph two of the NCT's 'Expectant Fathers' leaflet is sexist but the NCT in general is not. It is an organisation started for women by women and if it hadn't

been in existence the women's movement would have done well to invent it. The Trust's teachers do this work because they care about women and it is of deep concern to many of us that few of us reach working class women. However we do try to influence the thinking of NHS antenatal teachers (some of us are accepted to teach for the NHS).

I am closely involved in the women's movement as well as with the NCT and I would like to see a closer association between the two.
Yours sincerely,
Jessica Hall
Southampton

Sheer Bloody Agony

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Congratulations on your article on childbirth. The myth of giving birth — the picture of the stork/of the smiling couple leaving the nursing home/of the pretty 'Congratulations' cards showing the 'bonny' baby/of the happy event. The myth of the few contractions, the few pushes — and out pops the bouncing baby! The way men take childbirth for granted — and natural!

Women need to be told the truth. Mothers should tell daughters the bare facts — that childbirth can be a bloody awful ordeal. That your body is ripped to get the baby out. That the pain is the worst pain known. More pain than any man will ever know — a medical fact — that the pain of childbirth is several degrees worse than any other pain.

A friend of mine, in her teens at the time and totally unaware of what was really involved in childbirth, described the experience as 'sheer bloody agony', and described the ripping of the flesh and the stench of blood the whole time.

It's about time the bullshit about childbirth is finished with and women are educated properly about the 'happy event'.

I am, by the way, interested in collecting information about child-

continued on page 8

SHORTLIST

Compiled by Jill Nicholls. Please send any information to Shortlist, Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St. London W1A 4XS.

events

Connections

"We are inviting people to come and live, work, play, learn and be together this summer. To talk about connections between all the big macro-political fragments, and especially, between these and our own daily lives." Over 4 weeks, July 26-August 22. S.a.e. and ideas to Laurieston Hall, Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland. Registration £2; cost about £1.50 a day, children half-price.

Vocal Workshop

"Women find it difficult to yell, to completely let go from right inside. It puts you in touch with your whole self, your breathing mechanism. You just feel so good when you let everything out." (*Spare Rib* No.33.) With Frankie Armstrong. July 30 at 8pm in the Union Tavern, Lloyd Baker St, London WC1.

Campaign for Homosexual Equality

CHE is holding its annual conference on August 22-25 (bank holiday weekend) in Sheffield City Hall. An opportunity for gays from all over the country to get together, and CHE's policy-making forum. The Women's Campaign Committee is proposing that new groups asking for CHE recognition should have to have a 50/50 women/men ratio, and that more money and resources should go into the women's campaign. Also workshops, plays, music. Everyone welcome. Booking forms from 22 Gt. Windmill St, London W1.

International Creativity Camp
August 25-31 at a camping site in Viserbella, 2 km. from Rimini in Italy. 3,000 places, though 200 had already been booked (management promises "full freedom of movement" all the same). To make music, films, videos; play games, sing songs. The organising group needs to know how many women are coming and what they can contribute to the activities. Cost about 400 lire a day, not including food. Contact 22 Rue Chaptal, 75009 Paris (tel 280 - 18 - 79); cheques to Fete Internationale des Femmes, if you can pay some in advance.

Family Planning Association
Lunch-time talks, some with films, on a wide range of subjects relating to women and birth control. About once a month. Contact FPA, 27-35 Mortimer St. London W1A 4QW (01 - 636 7866).

campaigns

Abortion: Action Guide
Produced by *A Woman's Right to*

Choose as a follow-up to their brief on the Bill, to keep the campaign alive over the summer. Includes suggestions from local groups, tips on petitioning (now due in at the end of August), information on how every MP has voted on the abortion issue, and on which trade unions and trades councils have supported the campaign so far. 52pp. for 15p. plus 8p. postage from 186 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1X 9DE.

Abortion: Theatre

West London Theatre Workshop has prepared a 20 minute play - *The Right to Choose* - for use at meetings around the country. They're also working on a longer play, analysing access to abortion as a class issue, and want to carry on campaigning with these plays in the autumn. We must get more people to take the abortion issue seriously, and not let it drop after the June 21 demo - nor even if White's Bill is defeated. To discuss possible autumn bookings, contact Diane Lambert, 11 Acklam Road, London W10 (01 - 969 9348 or 969 2292/3).

WACC

The national WACC newsletter is now being produced in Liverpool, not Bristol. Send any news items, stories or pictures to 49 Seel St, Liverpool 1.

Childcare

It is now official policy of the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions to campaign for creches in colleges. They've produced a leaflet *Nurseries and Playgroups - a plan for action*, "a basic guide to the steps you should take", and a pamphlet *Nurseries and Playgroups*, full of useful information - sample questionnaires, relevant regulations, details of successful campaigns. This will be updated from time to time. Available from ATTI, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BH.

arts

Women and Photography

We are photographing *Women at Work in Hackney*, at the invitation of the Women's Sub Group of Hackney Trades Council, for an exhibition in Hackney Town Hall in September. Hackney is littered with factories and sweatshops, mostly filled round the clock with women. We have been photographing women inside factories, shops, schools and nurseries, on the streets, and in their own homes.

We are an expanding and contracting group of people - so far only one man - and we have been working in changing pairs (usually one experienced and one less so). We aren't aiming too high with our first exhibition: so far we've only raised £25, which hardly covers the cost of

the film. We are sharing each others' equipment, excited to be working together, not all grafting away in separate darkrooms, grappling with separate problems. We have a growing awareness of the lot of women, who serve tea, clean floors, wipe babies' bottoms, collect money, answer phones, type letters, do repetitive tasks on deafening machines, yet still manage to smile when we point our cameras at them.

We have also taken pictures of women doing jobs not traditionally left to females. We've been inside the local technical college (a male sanctuary) and were amused to hear the man in charge of the electronics laboratory say he hoped he never had a woman in the place - his floor was being swept by a woman as he spoke. As we left the building the male porter called us over and said "This woman can work a machine..." He proceeded to get one out and

and film studios). It outlines the system of exemptions (of 2 million women working in factories, nearly 200,000 are covered by exemption orders), and the main arguments for and against repealing the laws. The most familiar argument for repeal is that women will never be paid and treated as men's equals while they continue to be treated unequally by the law. Anna Coote insists that "nobody should have to work long, unhealthy, unsocial hours to get adequate wages". Women don't want to pay the price for "equality" by transferring the worst features of men's lives to their own. She argues for *positive discrimination* in favour of women, discriminated against for centuries, and quotes Muriel Browning, a T&GWU shop steward, "Night work in factories meets only the need for profits: machines won't suffer any pangs if they are turned off at night".



encourage her to perform for us by polishing the floor.

Many of our group are about to leave London, but we want to carry on working on other projects after this exhibition. Anyone in London who'd like to join can contact me at 152 Upper St, London N1 (01 - 226 0367).

Jo Spence

Merseyside Arts Festival

Liverpool Women's Liberation are planning an arts festival for later this year. They need: someone to help organise it, preferably staying in Liverpool over the summer (they can provide accommodation); people to exhibit work, act, sing, dance; ideas on fund-raising and on publicity. Contact Maggy Wallace, 49 Seel St, Liverpool 1.

pamphlets

Women Factory Workers

The case against repealing the protective laws

by Anna Coote
NCCL, 15p., 12pp.

Traces moves towards the repeal of the protective laws which limit shift work, night work and long hours of overtime for women. Under the present Health and Safety at Work Act this legislation could be repealed gradually and replaced by ministerial regulations, without debate in Parliament.

It states clearly what the regulations which could be abolished *are*, and that they apply only to factories (though that includes slaughterhouses

Equal Pay and How to Get It
by Ruth Lister and Marion Lowe
NCCL, 20p., 17pp.

Another pamphlet from NCCL on women's employment - this one a practical guide to what the Equal Pay Act means, what you can claim under it, how employers are getting round it, what to do if your employer refuses to obey the law. Plus a useful appendix on job evaluation. Both available, plus postage, from 186 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1

Guide to the Finer Report
50p., 27pp.

There are 650,000 one parent families in Britain. In 5 out of the 6 the parent is a woman. 95% of the population now marry, 32% of the women when under 20. Divorce has been easier since the 1969 Reform Act and there are increasing numbers of one parent families, often with very young children.

A society based on the self-sufficient two parent family, in which a dependent child-rearing role is imposed on the woman, is ill-equipped to cope with the one parent family. Over half live on the official poverty line, on supplementary benefit. 15% live even below that on irregular maintenance payments and part-time earnings. Lone mothers are condemned to poverty and often intolerably isolated, with little chance of finding daycare facilities for their children so they can go out to work if they want to. Anyway their earning potential is less than half that of men. Local authority housing policies often fail to take account of their position and force them into the private sector

where they pay very high rents for very low quality accommodation. Because of the inadequacy of essential supportive facilities 60% of the children in long-term Local authority care are from one parent families.

Lone mothers, of course, have always been well aware of their appalling situation, but not until the report of the Finer Committee on One Parent Families was published last year were their difficulties fully documented. The Committee was set up by the Labour Government in 1969, but so little research had been done that it took them 4½ years to complete their report. It describes the situation and makes 230 recommendations – mainly on income, family law, daycare and housing.

The government has virtually ignored the Report, so Gingerbread organised a demonstration on July 2 to demand action. The Finer Joint Action Committee (a group of 19 voluntary organisations) has produced *A Guide to the Finer Report* – an excellent summary of the 900 page original. It should be studied by the women's movement as an essay on oppression. Available plus 10p. postage from the National Council for One Parent Families, 255 Kentish Town Rd, London NWS.

Tessa Woodcraft

Battered Women Need Refuges
Report from the National Women's Aid Federation
30p., 53pp.

How to start a women's aid group: dealing with the council (housing department and social services) and with other agencies (DHSS, Shelter), publicity, fund-raising. How to put the notion of self-help into practice, and how to explain it to the council ("Wot! no warden?")

This very readable pamphlet, with cartoons by See Red, considers the alternatives available to a battered woman – temporary accommodation provided by the housing dept., staying with relatives, staying where she is, at risk of further violence, mental breakdown, possibly mental hospital. It denies the allegation that women would flock to refuges if they were less crowded and more comfortable.

Includes reports from Leeds, York, Norwich and Shield in Manchester, and ends with an outline of the law relating to battered women, though to take legal action you'd need to refer to the NCCL pamphlet *Battered Women: How To Use The Law*, 30p., or the Interaction Advisory Service Handbook *Battered Women and the Law*, 30p. The report is available from 21 Muller Rd, Kings Ave, London SW4 (01 - 870 6850).

Battered Spouses

by Nick Miller
Occasional Papers on Social Administration No. 57
£2, 69pp.

"Spouses" so as not to deny the possibility of battered husbands, just because it's always the wives who run crying for help. A very scholarly and pernicious piece of sociology: "Empirical work on the practical response of the police in these circumstances (Parnas 1967, Lambert 1970, Punch and Naylor 1973) bears

out the general theoretical impression that in this sort of case the police will emphasize their task of 'peace-keeping' rather than adopting a 'law enforcement' approach (Wilson 1968). Hence the emphasis will be on settling the problem by consensus methods based on mutual understanding between the parties to the dispute with the police in a neutral arbitrating position." See Red's cartoon seems appropriate:



Now then sir... what seems to be the trouble

The Boxmakers

by John Jennings and Penny Brown
A SOGAT publication, 25p., 36pp.
A brief but detailed illustrated history of the paper box industry, the Wages Council and the struggle for trade union recognition. In the late nineteenth century boxes were made mainly by women and girls, working either in small cramped sweatshops, or taking the cardboard and wrappers home. They were paid on a piecework basis, so much per gross of boxes for pills and patent medicines, matches and wedding cake.

Employers always wanted "respectable girls, with at least a little grammar school education", who wouldn't go "to dances and nickel shows every night". When that was

films

Iris Films

This new feminist film company in the States is organising a National Women's Film Circuit. The first package of films will tour 20 cities. This should expand in time, and each city included should receive a new film package every 6 months. Proceeds will be divided among the filmmakers, Iris Films and the local producers.

To select films for this circuit, they are sponsoring a festival in Washington DC this summer. Entry forms were meant to be in by July 1, but it might still be worth a try if you've a film to show.

Iris also hopes to share skills and resources, and train women in film (especially racial minority and poor women). Their longterm aim is a women's film production house. They want to hear from women with

films for the festival, equipment to loan or give, skills of all kinds to share (filmmaking, legal, financial, promotional), and of course they need money. Iris Films West, PO Box 26463, Los Angeles, CA, 90026. Iris Films East, PO Box 2934, Washington DC, 20013.

Women's Studies and Film

The British Film Institute wants to collect films that will represent the history of women film-makers, to compile film study extracts, slides, documentation and a Women and Film Resources Handbook. They need information about women and film courses now going on, and evidence to present to distributors to show that there is a demand for films made by women (i.e. that a new 16mm print will receive at least 20 bookings in 2 years to cover costs.) Contact Nicky North or Christine Gledhill, BFI Educational Advisory Service, 62 Dean St, London London W1V 6AA.

written, in 1920, women were getting 5s. a week. One boxmaker recalls: "My first brush with the forewoman came when she told me to go and clean the lavatories. I refused, so I was sent into the manager, who was the owner of the works in those days. He asked me why I'd refused. I told him I'd come there to learn a trade not to do a charwoman out of a job. Surprisingly he agreed with me. The forewoman said I was a cheeky bitch! I stayed for a year with wages at 5s. a week. The manager asked why I was leaving and I told him 5s. didn't keep me in lunches."

With more mechanisation more men came into the industry, and as the carton industry invariably involved printing, many of the skills cut across printing skills (male). In 1945 a new

minimum skilled rate was introduced – 92s. 6d. for men, 46s. for women.

In 1969 the employers were still trying to buy off the men at the expense of the women. When workers said they found themselves "climbing a downward escalator which was being speeded up", Alderman Robinson replied that as there was only a certain amount of cake to be divided, the workers must decide whether they wished to give priority to men or women. Powell, now General President, insisted that both increases were equally important. SOGAT's equal pay deal in the box industry will be implemented in November this year.

Available from the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades, 74 Nightingale Lane, London SW12 8NR.



'Box-making in London's East End', from Cassell's Family Magazine (Mary Evans Picture Library).

birth — personal experiences, etc. — and contacting anyone interested in writing a book on 'The Real Child-birth'.

Yours sincerely,
Lindsay McCutcheon
Cleveland
TS3 7JU

Induction

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I must challenge your article 'Child-birth' on two main points.

Why attack an organisation (the NCT) which helps women to take an active, participant role in the birth of their babies and provides about the only education in child-birth which includes the sensations and emotions involved. Of course some women are disillusioned when they find they need drugs but this is not the fault of the classes. During the class I attended at the NCT last year we were advised to ask for an epidural if we had a backache labour because such labours tend to be long and gruelling and there is nothing to be gained from stoical endurance.

This is the underlying argument behind the induction-for-convenience debate. Are we going to regard pregnancy as normal or abnormal?

Once administrative changes have been made to a nine to five, five-day week and all births are timetabled any further debate will be hypothetical; all births will take place in hospital and there will be no spontaneous deliveries because the expertise will not exist to cope with them. This is no futuristic prophesy of doom, the *Sun* on 17.2.75 reported:

'Last year the Central Midwives Board, the body that controls the training of British midwives, was so concerned that it told 300 schools that pupil midwives should be taught how to deliver babies naturally. "The professional staff who inspect our schools were concerned that many midwives were only learning the techniques of active management of labour".'

There is little proof that the reduction in the perinatal mortality rate is due to increased obstetric technology or a higher percentage of hospital births. An improvement in nutritional and living standards among socio-economic groups IV and V ('high risk' groups) is one factor. Another is the increased number of therapeutic abortions amongst the other 'high risk' groups (young and unmarried girls; older mothers and mother expecting fourth and subsequent children), i.e. the pregnancy is terminated which might have ended in a stillborn child.

In a survey into female depression in 1,000 women Depressives Anonymous found a strong connection between artificial birth methods (induction) and post-natal depression. Following a request from AIMS, 800 letters were received by the *Sun* and 600 by the Pebble Mill programme on induction and these will be forwarded to the DHSS. What surveys has the Women's Movement

been conducting? What evidence will they present to the DHSS? None I suspect. The furor of activity over the Abortion Bill and the lack of it over the induction issue lead me to the cynical conclusion that the movement is more interested in the plight of women who do not wish to give birth than in the plight of women who do. Thank God for the vigilance of those 'confident leisured women' who are actively and deeply concerned.

Yours sincerely,
Vivienne Welburn
London W2

Unnatural Fear

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I am very disappointed in your article on childbirth. I am writing to express my concern that your article is likely to make some women feel quite frightened which is the very reason why childbirth has become such a problem.

Childbirth is, as you say, very much considered a physical illness these days. It's due to ignorance both on the part of the doctors and the mothers. Ignorance breeds fear and I met a few women who were terrified of the whole process. Some women, and I think probably a far greater number than you say, can enjoy childbirth, though obviously for some it is more painful. But the bias in your article is disturbing.

Quite honestly, I think a large part of the answer to the problem is to have more women doctors and to educate them and nurses in the psychological aspects of childbirth. I suffered from antenatal depression which the doctors said was unheard of and must be due to some chemical reaction going on in my body. Fucking stupid! Sheila Kitzinger recognised that antenatal depression is probably caused by horror at the thought of the role of housewife — mother, washing nappies, etc. I'm sure this was the reason for mine. I also met some psychiatric nurses in hospital who thought it was totally

irrelevant for them to be in a maternity hospital.

I believe it is the right of a woman to give birth to her child the way she wants to. As far as I can see at the moment the only women who can give birth in the way that they want to are those who take a man in with them to yell and swear at the hospital staff. After all, when you're in labour you're not in a very good position to argue with them. Speaking of positions if a woman wants to give birth crouching which is very natural, why should she be forced to lie flat?

(Childbirth) is no longer in this decadent western society regarded as a natural function. Perhaps the reason for this is that we are no longer in tune with our bodies anyway, through bad diet, lack of exercise, etc. Perhaps our society is becoming so artificial that childbirth is having to be artificial. Isn't there a type of dog (dachshounds or beagles) that have been bred to such strange refinement that they can only give birth by caesarian.

I don't think the answer to pain in childbirth lies in giving more drugs. It is far more likely to be found in a general getting back to a more simple life style and learning to know our bodies much better and not to fear them, and not relying so much on the medical profession — which is what the self help groups are about. Yours sincerely,
Sylvie Insch
Edinburgh

Antenatal Classes

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Although I enjoyed reading the article on women's attitudes to pain in childbirth, I felt that it did not give a complete view, and certainly not about classes in preparation for birth.

I do not believe in treating expectant mothers like half-wits who cannot realise that pain relief for them may affect the progress of labour and also be too big a load for

the baby's liver to handle without harmful, although possibly short-lived effects. I think that what a good teacher has to do is to stand beside women to help them face reality, which is not necessarily easy or painless, but has to be faced with understanding and with skills which permit the labouring woman to make an adaptive response to stress.

Of course pharmacological pain relief should always be available for all women who decide they want it. But it is the woman herself who should decide whether she needs it. This is accepting adult responsibility for one's labour.

A good antenatal class is not a cosy Nanny-run nursery. It is an exciting exploration into reality in which women together share their problems and discoveries.

Yours sincerely,
Sheila Kitzinger
Witney
Oxon

Post-natal Depression

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Having just read the article on childbirth there are some points that I should like to make.

the most superficial and mistaken part of the article was the analysis (three sentences of it) of the depression which at least one woman out of six will experience after birth. One letter to *Spare Rib* suggests to the authors that 'shock after childbirth may be one of the main causes of post-natal depression' and lo and behold, by the end of the article, it has become fact... 'the real work necessary to make childbirth a truly safe and painless experience will not be done and doctors will go on wondering what post-natal depression is all about'. Post-natal depression happens after 'good' and 'bad' births; to all kinds of women. It is surely part of the changing image women have of themselves; after going out to work, motherhood, with its isolation, lack of direction, support, or recognisable rewards, is often a bigger 'shock' than the worst labour.

Yours,
Jane Stevenson
Brighton
Sussex

Crucifying

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Reading your article I just burst into tears — our experience of pregnancy, childbirth and childcare during the last five years has been emotionally crucifying and I am just so grateful that some women, somewhere, are getting it down on paper for the rest of the world to grasp. I was fortunate in that my husband desperately wanted our child and supported me 100% against social conditioning and pressures which all seemed to me hell-bent on destroying the vice-like tie between parent and child.

Yours sincerely,
Linda Jones
London N12

* All letters on childbirth have been cut so that we could include as many points as possible.





'Please go out and photograph the first harrassed, middle-aged woman you meet and she'll look just like me.' Ann Jackson

Where do I go from here?

This is another in our series, following the request in *Spare Rib* No.28 for readers to interview themselves.

For three generations my family has believed in liberation for women.

Grandmother was pleased she was born a girl. If she had been a boy, she'd have gone down the pits like her brothers. Instead she became a teacher. Grandfather, a pit-lad with a passionate belief in education, delayed marriage till he had his manager's ticket, which he worked for in the evenings after a full day. He chose a wife who was educated and would stand beside, not behind him. He brought up his three daughters to believe that every woman should have a trade or profession so that she could be independent if she needed to be.

The only one of his daughters to have children, my mother, was left a widow in her early thirties, with three small daughters. My grandfather's views, very progressive for his day and the community he lived in, paid off. But a teacher's wage couldn't pay for someone to look after me all day, and keep my mother and sisters, so at two years I went to live with my aunt.

If I had ever wanted further proof of the need for women to be liberated, it was all

there, though I didn't recognise it at the time. As a child I saw very clearly that men lived a vigorous, jolly, enviable life, doing interesting jobs and pushing off in their free time to a variety of places. I saw that women lived alone shut in four walls, except for occasional shopping sorties, and then they were always anxious about getting back on time. Men never worried about getting home on time. I saw that men were more fun to be with: they did funny dances, and told jokes in broad accents, and swung you up in the air till you cried with laughing. Women weren't fun at all. They made little pecking hen-like physical movements and were quiet and prim. Men smelt better, too. Men smelt of clean shirts or fresh sweat; women smelt disgustingly of stale woollen clothes. When you sat on men's knees, their bodies felt relaxed and firm and muscular. When you sat on women's knees they felt soft, like caterpillars, except where their corsets were. If you ran your hand down their backs, you could feel a soft bulge of flesh, and then the hard stays. I used to do it sometimes and get a thrill of disgust. I

didn't ever want to grow up into a woman.

At school I learned a lot of other things, about boys and girls. If I did something clever, the teacher (a man) said to the boys, "Fancy letting a girl beat you!" It didn't matter that I had done well, only that they had done less than well. I learned that *knickers were rude* and you mustn't let them show. But there was hardly any physical activity you could do without them showing, so the girls moved about very little, especially as they got older. Trousers were rude for girls too - I knew, because I asked about it - and when I demanded to know *why* it was rude for girls to wear trousers, I was met with pursed faces and "Never you mind."

I reached grammar school still a cheerful hoyden in spite of it all, and used to get fed up with being told "Fancy a *girl* having fingernails that colour!" and "Fancy a *girl* coming into the classroom with her hair untidy like that!" I was made to stand before the class as an example, and even in my deep embarrassment I felt a hot resentment that somehow it was alright for boys >

to have dirty nails and tousled hair when they came in from play.

Then a really horrible thing happened to me.

I had been light and spry, had played mostly with the boys, jumping and running as well as they could and even, after much pestering, sporting one of the first pairs of girls' shorts in the district (though "Girls don't wear pyjamas."). Then, just as it seemed I was wriggling out of my horrid chrysalis, my body swelled up, vast and ungainly and caterpillar-soft, and I was that horrid, disgusting thing, a *woman*.

I was only eleven. I still read boys' adventure stories and fancied myself on a desert island harpooning fish or up the rigging of a schooner; and between chapters I had at last to own that I was imprisoned in this shameful flesh and would never break free. When I ran now, my backside lolloped behind me. When I jumped, my disgusting breasts jumped higher, and then slopped back with a painful thud. I suffered from time to time a foul issue of blood that prevented any running or jumping at all. I walked about with a folded towel slung between my legs, my thighs rubbed raw with it, worried that if I made a large movement the blood would trickle out and stain my knickers and gym tunic and *everyone would know*. It was impressed on me that the secret of this foul emission must be kept at all costs, and I read in the Bible about the woman with an issue of blood and how Jesus healed her and wondered if that was the same thing and why He had only healed one.

In my late teens, now at a girls' school, I learned to cope with my disabilities. I was very good at certain gymnastic feats, and was House Captain, and Vice-Head Girl. I cycled a great deal, alone (none of the other girls were keen, and their parents less so, whereas Auntie applauded it), and went Youth Hostelling, also alone. I gradually met friends in the hostels and used to go with them, after their credentials had been tactfully examined — which was again very progressive of Auntie. Also, I was going to university, and I was told that university opened all doors.

Auntie always said I should have a career and not a marriage, and I thought she was a sour old bitch who didn't want anyone else to be happy because her own marriage had gone wrong. She also told me not to have children, but I thought this was jealousy because she was barren. All the other women I knew cooed over babies. It never occurred to any of us that it might be because they had no option.

Anyway, off I went to university, where I joined the mountaineering club, and the Scottish country dancing club, and was a great success, and more of a lad than the lads. I had a friend called Ruth, and Ruth and I made history by going out drinking together, without men. The general (severe) opinion of our girl friends was that, if they hadn't known we were respectable, they wouldn't have thought so, and that we were most unwise. The lecture rooms were divided down the middle by a low wooden partition, and believe it or not, the men sat on one side and the women on the other! I had another friend called Gloria, a coloured girl, and we made history by sitting on the men's side,

for which we were initially hissed and treated to the scraping of many feet. After a while other girls joined us and the whole thing settled down. We used to sit next to Giles, who approached — he was a boyfriend of mine — but when he discovered that I went to Zoology lectures and actually drew disgusting pictures of things' insides he grew frigid and disapproving and finally withdrew his favours altogether. Gloria said he was no great loss. He was already very shocked at her because her family had baked beans for breakfast and *everybody* knew that baked beans weren't a breakfast food.

When we went to chapel on Sunday mornings, the men sat on one side of the kirk, the women on the other. I thought this remarkably silly, but when I got up the courage to say so, I was stamped on firmly, so I gave up going to chapel. I used to go instead to Mike's cafe. It was an invigorating place, full of heated discussion about Malthus and Communism and the social and religious customs of the various occupants' groups, and discrimination against Jews and coloured people (never against women though); and cigarette ash and dirty coffee cups and the more sensational Sunday papers. I liked Mike's. The people there treated me like a whole person, not as just a woman.

Let it not be supposed in all this that I was without female vanities. I liked to try out new shades of face powder and lipstick (items I had never worn till then), and listened to the talk of how necessary it was in the interests of decency to wear a light elastic roll-on so that no-one would know you had a tummy.

I left university with the sinking feeling that I had not, like so many of my friends, Got a Man. Ahead of me lay two appalling alternatives — teaching or a thing called Market Research. That was all I could get.

I chose Market Research. I can't say I regretted my choice so much as I regretted that after my huge efforts it had been the only choice open to me. I had answered so many ads., I had importuned so many firms and newspapers and journals. The men were going off to fine-sounding jobs as archivists and trainee managers, researchers and journalists. I was going off to Market Research, where they didn't, for obscure reasons, take men.

I soon learned why. No man would have tolerated the salary we were paid, nor the coy, arch way we were treated, nor the dismal work. I could see it was a mug's game and I began to get all knotted up and eaten up with jealousy of the men who never came in at our lowly grade, and in the end I was fired.

In the following months I was fired from more lowly jobs than I could count on the fingers of my hands.

Of course, I got married. At the time, it seemed the best thing to do, and maybe in the circumstances it was. We were very poor, and I had three children, and I was so busy sluttng around after a bed-wetter, a backward baby, a normal child and a despotic husband that I had no time to even ask myself about the position of women, till I surfaced (just) a few years later. Even then, I couldn't ask much, because I needed a home for my children, and I knew I would not get that if I didn't toe the line. But

inside I felt like a concentration camp victim.

I wasn't allowed to go to evening class because it clashed with His mealtime. I wasn't allowed to feed the baby or put the toddler to bed until He was fed (it didn't matter to him that I snatched my food, warmed up, later). When we went out, he inspected my clothes and if he didn't like them I had to go up and change. He wouldn't discuss current affairs with me: he said I must understand that he'd discussed it already with the men at work and he didn't want to go over it all again. It began to seem that mine were all the duties, his the pleasures, of our life.

As naturally as night follows day, the inevitable happened. I took to wild nights on the sly — and wild days, too. I felt so sad about this. It was not at all how I had envisaged marriage; but I knew I couldn't survive without. Indeed, I felt positively better for my brief breakings free, and I am glad they happened, for they were about the only happy things that happened in that time. I think I was a better mother because of them, too. I began to feel fulfilled and a real person instead of a degraded slave, and I enjoyed the children more.

The next stage was when I began full-time employment in the previously scorned field of teaching. I had taken a second degree while the children were at nursery school. Once I was teaching, He stopped my housekeeping money, so I bought all the household goods. I became obsessed with the idea that the children must have a happy childhood to remember, and I spent my money on them and on new clothes for my daughter and me. I became passionately addicted to clothes. I wanted us both to have all the pretty things I had never possessed as a child.

For that matter I began to wonder whether I ranked as an adult even now. I could not dress as I liked, or make a hire purchase arrangement, and when I went with two pounds for Co-op shares, my husband's name was put in the book. Our house belonged only to my husband.

I did my job, growing harder and colder inside, realising that this was how life was and this was how it was going to remain. My children were my only hope and salvation. I had hoped my job would be my salvation. I loved my work and found a deep satisfaction in it. To my surprise, this was not appreciated. The men wanted me out. Not just me, all women. They didn't mind us in the schools earning pin-money provided our husbands' money was low, but I, who had a husband earning high, had greedily snatched a graded post that by rights belonged to someone with a wife and family. That was more than they could stand. So I taught till it suited me to leave, left at the most awkward moment possible, and thought, well — where do I go from here?

I'm still wondering. I have a long stretch ahead of me, and it surely can't be all as bad as what's gone before. Things are looking up for women all the time. Maybe I was just born in the wrong day and age, but things are getting better.

Why, when I first started rousing the rabble at coffee-mornings, we didn't even dream of a *Spare Rib*.

Ann Jackson

Young people whose sexuality is cramped by fear, ignorance and the stereotypes of male/female sexual behaviour force-fed by television and films are unlikely to grow into happy and creative adults. Most adolescents can't talk openly with their parents about sex and relationships. And sex education in schools has largely been restricted to dry lectures on biology, embarrassing for teachers and frustrating for pupils. In the London comprehensive where Jodi Kirby is a final year pupil feminist teachers are talking with pupils about sex in the way they themselves shared experiences in consciousness-raising groups. Jodi describes what this change has meant to her:

I had no real sex education until I reached the sixth year of my secondary school.

In the first few years, I must admit we were given sex education, but it was very crude. The girls were separated from the boys and we were shown really disgusting films, which in my opinion should have been shown to six-year-old children. They were cartoon pictures of a girl and a boy. The commentator spoke as if he were talking to a bunch of infant children. He spoke in this kind of way, "Now here we have a boy and here a girl." These cartoons were supposed to be mature people, the male did not have any pubic hair around his penis and the girl did not have a single hair on her fanny, and a chest like a billboard. Their faces were the faces of small kids. It was just hilarious. The film was on *How to have a Baby* and it was so pathetic. The bloke was placed on top of the woman and just pumped what he had into her (or what he didn't have). Or this is what you were supposed to think, because the couple never actually showed any action or movement.

So you can imagine it. These two cartoon people who looked about ten, just lying there. The girl flat on her back with this bloke's penis in her. It was so pathetic.

The boys in my class saw a film about VD but of course we girls were not allowed to see it because it had a penis in it.

But the girls were rewarded for being good girls and for not being inquisitive – the week after, we were given a lecture on menstrual periods, and of course the boys were unable to see it. The talk was simply awful, the woman made it sound as if having periods was being a criminal, some girls even fainted.

So when I reached the sixth form I was really pleased about the education on sex that I was given. It was dealt with in such a realistic way, and the teachers were so straightforward. They used their own personal experiences to help us to talk and make the shy ones amongst us to come out of their shells.

The first few weeks we had the lesson everyone was a bit shy to speak, but as time went by we found ourselves telling each other about our own experiences. So as well

as the teacher helping us we all contributed to the lesson by telling about ourselves.

The speech is not inhibited. You can use any form of speech you want to use. You don't have to sit down and use the words such as penis and vagina or any other words that might have cropped up. But we used words which most of the class knew and understood.

I personally think that sex education is essential for people to start learning from a really early age. Because couples at a much younger age are having sexual relations and there are now many young girls who are getting pregnant. I feel this is because they are ignorant about things such as contraception and sex.

The education I have received has really helped me in my own relationship which I am having now.

Abortion and contraception were two subjects which we all looked into quite deeply. This was very interesting as well as helpful. When finding out about the different forms of contraception, the teachers were very truthful about the dangers and did not pretend that they were all good and did you no harm. They told us where to go and get information on these subjects.

We also learnt about our own bodies. This was really useful as many of us did not know about ourselves. It helped me tremendously, it helped me understand how an orgasm works and what parts of the body help in achieving an orgasm. We learnt about the different symptoms of different infections and illnesses. The symptoms of VD, pregnancy and other illnesses such as appendicitis, etc. Although some of it was not sex education it was all very useful.

I think if this course was taken from the list of subjects it would be disastrous, and it would be depriving people from learning about their own bodies which they have a right to know about. I am really concerned about this and even if it is not taken from the list of subjects it will still only be taught to fourth, fifth and sixth years. It should be taught from early on in school life, from the second year onwards. Kids should know about sex as it is part of everyday life and most of them will have sexual relations sooner or later.

Caroline Maidlaw



Young Girl, Whitechapel

My sister, who is now 13, has just started dating. She has begun to read all my books on anatomy, sex and contraceptives, but the trouble is she does not understand any of it. If I try to explain to her about it she just closes the book and says she does not want to read about it any more. I find it really distressing and she must find it frustrating. But I think if she had the lessons and teachers I have had it would be much easier for her. She would not be the only one in the class who wanted to know and ask things, everyone would want to know and her shyness would slowly leave her.

Sex plays a big part in the lives of most people and many girls whom I know are having quite serious sexual relations, and their sex education has helped them a lot.

My bloke and I talk a lot about our relationship and where my teachers have helped me. My bloke and I are able to help and understand each other in a really fabulous way. □

Learning about Sex

by Jodi Kirby

Exercise in Trust

Penny and Anne met in the United States last summer, where they began the therapy which is continued in these letters. Penny writes to Anne in journal form with dated entries; Anne replies at the end with a single letter suggesting exercises to help Penny in her self-exploration.

In the previous section, Penny explored her memories and feelings about sexuality. In this, the final part of the series, Penny goes deeper. She discovers more of the elements which make up her sexual identity — and falls in love.

Dec 5

I'm running over. It's hard to know where to start, especially in terms of my current assignment, your exercise, *make no explanations or justifications*. I've been falling over that all day, which means it's a really good exercise. I keep seeing how much time I spend arguing with myself. Like recognising tense muscles, I see what a waste this internal chatter about whether I deserve a cookie this morning, why I walked down this walk instead of that, is it neurotic to be walking down this walk instead of that, is this why nobody likes me, and on and on and on. How I am defining the exercise now is: drop defensiveness. I want to talk, to you, I want to be able to talk to other people. It's that place where exposure shades into apology I'd better watch.

This week is Gay Pride Week at the University. I've managed to avoid all the panels, all the lectures. Today I didn't have any excuses so I went to a panel. A tiny coming-out. I was as nervous as a cat. But I was pleased to be there, proud of the people on the panel, who were just fine. I stayed on campus tonight and went to one of the last events, what was to have been women's music. Musicians didn't show up, but there was some disorganised and really very good guitar playing. I spent more of the time listening to an overweight woman I got tired of listening to. But it was OK. I didn't have any trouble about talking.

Just now when I came home I had a real test of my not-explaining-to-others. I called Nan, which I felt a little uneasy about anyway because I knew I was doing it partly because I felt guilty for going to the thing alone. I had forgotten she had asked me to go, but I hadn't forgotten she usually wants me to do things with her. I need to do these things alone. I was married to Nan, effectively, and I did that very bad thing of merging my ego with hers, relying on her, being proud of her, getting strokes not just from her but through her — feeling my worth boosted because she's such a smart, tough woman and so great-looking, feeling my worth reduced when she got drunk or otherwise seemed to me to make a fool of herself. That's sick business. Obviously it was unfair to her too. That's one of the things I have to work out before I can ever be one of two again. Being one. Being one. When I called she was sick, she's come down with the goddamn cold she nursed me through last weekend; she *had* asked me to go to the thing tonight and I'd forgotten, she was pretty clearly hurt and miffed. I didn't apologise and didn't explain, because I felt so defensive it would have been the same old kind for sure. I'm not sure how I feel about this. I think I'll show her what I'm writing now. I would like her to understand what I'm

Patricia Wright



Lise Folkman

Anne Severson



Patricia Wright

doing, and I think she'd probably be supportive. I would like her to understand this effort — I believe that could be the good kind of explaining. Another half-formed thought that is floating around: it's that the usual kind of defensive explaining is shoring up the dikes — emphasising the skin that separates me from the world. I want that skin to go. The other day the wind was rising in the trees in the pioneer cemetery when I came out into the open space behind the education building, on my way to the music class. The wind rose high and all that space was invisible movement around me, and something shook loose and I felt the wind whirling inside my body also. Whirl, wind, whirl, I thought, pare me from the inside, pare me from the nut, pare me till my skin's as thin as shavings, pare me till it's thin as onionskin, pare me till I sift and whirl away.

Dec 6

I had an encounter this afternoon that had me somewhat agitated, not that I'd been particularly calm to begin with. It's an encounter I'd been wanting for a long time. I ran into a woman Nan and I met several years ago with her lover. I didn't notice much about Hilda at the time except she had awful skin, terrific curly hair and a good angular grace. I was more interested in her lover, who was a tough little woman with a scarred face and the most direct eyes I've ever seen. Last winter, not long after Christmas, Nan and I met Hilda in the street. I couldn't get her off my mind for days, I had very explicit sexual fantasies about her. I was shocked by this, because it hadn't happened since I'd been with Nan. (My hands look rather ugly on the keys, flaccid and boneless. I'm feeling unattractive and as though my face is breaking out.) I'd been thinking for months of leaving Nan, trying to know how and when. When that happened I knew I really had to, I felt so hypocritical. Because she thought I was still in love with her. I think that now I could be in love with one person and attracted strongly to another, but that wasn't the case at the time. I'd known it for a long time and was just tipped into feeling it was an unconscionable lie I was living. So I told her, and we began that journey.

But I never saw Hilda again — we'd given her our number, she'd never called. We didn't know her last name. A few times I've seen her on the street at a distance. Today, closer, as I was starting home from the music appreciation class. So I called to her, and we walked along together to her house which was on my way, and had a cup of tea. She is a lovely — the word in my mouth is *girl*, there's no way round that. Girl because I see her as an object. Isn't it bitter, being

gay has simplified my attitudes toward men at least for the time being — I just don't deal with them, that's simple. But my feelings toward women are rather complicated right now, and not too nice, or not the way I'd want to be felt about — or would I? As a matter of fact I'd like it if women seemed to be thinking of me as a sex object right now, but no one does! Hmm. I'd been going to say, guess I still will, that I can sympathise now with adolescent boys and men who see women through a sort of clammy sexual mist. Probably like many an adolescent boy I wouldn't know what to do with willingness. Just as it's occurred to me more than once that for all my insinuations and invitations I'd be thrown into confusion if you reached for me in a passionate way. I think this sense of impotence — nope, didn't think frigidity, thought impotence — may be really basic to this kind of fantasising about unlikely objects.

It was hard not to feel slightly false with Hilda even though not lying, because of that level of ulterior motive about which I was being discreet. We talked about the poetry she's thinking about and the paintings I'm thinking about, and it was the first two-way conversation like that I've had in a long time, and I've wanted it. The falseness, because I wasn't prepared to come out and say, particularly with her room-mate somewhere around, "You are beautiful, I'm so drawn to you."

Now, there was at least one further thing I wanted to discuss, the macho woman thing. Last night writing, I was planning to show Nan what thoughts had occurred about our marriage, and thinking I might want to show her your letter too, since she is curious about what you say, and explain the current exercise. And I thought she would see your suggestion about the toilet paper penis and I imagined how she would react — laughing that dirty laugh — and would want to know if I'd tried it yet. And I wanted to have tried it when she asked, and also wanted to get it done as I'd felt a little giggly and anxious about it. So I went into the bathroom, having closed the bedroom door so I'd not be concerned about neighbours at all. I got some toilet paper and put it in my underpants, my overpants being baggy and it would have slipped. (I love you Anne. It will be all right, won't it. Nan tells me she loves me constantly, a number of times a day, or, now, at the end of each phone conversation, when she is afraid. And needs the "I love you too Nan". I need and thank you for the "I love you too Penny." However, if you would like to you can call me Patricia now. I say I am Patricia now, sometimes shyly and awkwardly, sometimes with conviction.) ... I put it in my underpants and patted the bulge. I felt surprised, mildly and pleasantly amused; it looked unfamiliar and more or less inappropriate but *not unnatural*. I put some more toilet paper in and laughed at doing that. I was quite impressive. Cock litanies run through my mind which feels a little unhinged right now. I'm sure this is a good idea, Anne, but it's pretty weird. I forgot to tell you I tried spitting the other morning on a walk I took after reading your letter. I think of that as very male, little boys used to practice it.



I did try stomping and strutting and talking tough but no cat to talk tough to, tried kind of talking tough to the wall heater, snarling at it and nudging it with my knee and showing off my toilet paper, but it didn't do much. It made me giggle and chuckle and giggle, polarities spinning like a freaked compass, Anne. I did see one thing from the strutting, and that's that I already strut. I love to lean my

shoulders back, my breasts are lovely and the line of my torso, lean on something and lean my pelvis out. Especially in summer in light and few clothes, umm-umm. I'd always been half-conscious of enjoying that display of my woman body but I saw last night that there was no way — however much I exaggerated and cartooned it — that I could mime a cock-walk that was intrinsically different, that the male appendage I was imagining for myself was pretty well if not perfectly at home with my already body personality. Anne! That's why I'm awkward. I'm afraid of coming out, of my man-me coming out.

Look, I am still going to be a woman, aren't I? I just read that last paragraph and I feel pretty kinky.

I was just reading back over tonight's work and I saw a crack. This does upset and embarrass. Sometimes I'm afraid you really will not have realised what you're (what we're, I don't mean in any bad way) unleashing in me and will finally be revolted and I'll lose you after all. But I know that's almost certainly not true, and if it is then it doesn't matter. So I'd better go after that crack. It's back where I said "I love you, Anne. It will be all right, won't it." The crack is after the "I love you." When I read it over I felt that what was in my mind was a strong sense of pleased male genitals there, and that it was a very sexual "I love you." I let my mind go as far as I could and felt that as a man desire you would be good. God, you're such a desirable woman, Anne, this may be more trouble than I'd been beginning to think. Why can't you look like Jung. Whatever he looked like. Smoke a pipe, damn it. Something. Anyway, what I did was twist away from the "I love you, woman" to an "I love you, mommy, will it be all right, mommy?" My mind is such a sneaky bastard I don't cease to be amazed. Clever. I feel brave. I may be unrecognisable by the time you get back to Oregon. I may be racing cars, eating raw meat.

Reading further on that page I see, not a crack, but an uncompleted thought — I forgot to get back to what had occurred to me about spitting. It's that I can't seminate with my paper penis. The spitting out fluid into the air from one end of my body if not another is a better male attribute than I'd thought when I did it, thinking of it as a cultural attribute only.

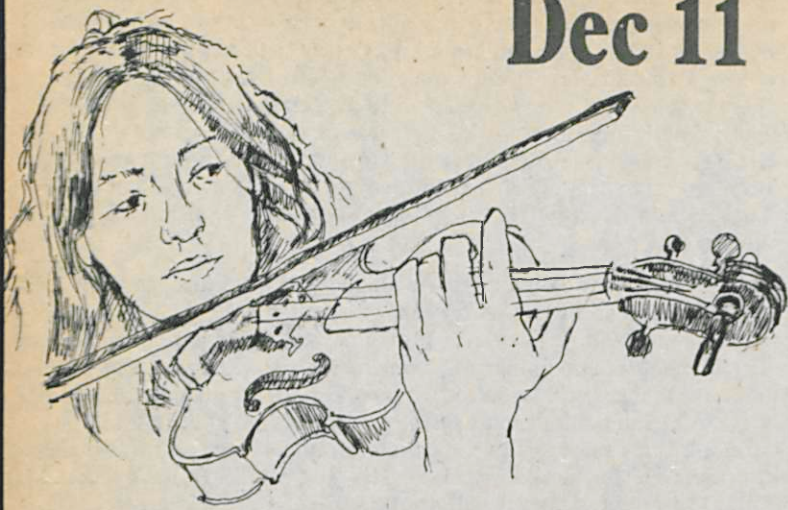
Now what is the logical result of this? I really like male-currented women; I am a male-currented woman; what does this make me, a male homosexual? I really am trying to go to bed.

Dec 7

Some thoughts about a form of penis-envy that interested me; listening to Nan talk about the discussion of monogamy in her lesbian rap group, thinking how I can't imagine feeling certain enough to make a long term commitment (someone was talking about 50 years); thinking that if I *could* imagine doing it, it would be with a more finely drawn, womanly, no, not womanly, feminine woman. That pulls me in some extra ways that stretch and catch my heart like the line of a melody or the lift of birds. If that delicacy is what I imagine I could live near for a long time, why have I got entangled with the women I have? I think I wanted to make off with their manliness, being out of touch with my own. I'd like to read some Jung now. Can you suggest where to start?

Some more thoughts about butchy women. I've always felt repelled by that but at the same time the women I've wanted have almost without exception had a strongly male current in them. And the very worst thing about Women's Press, the very hardest thing for me to cope with, was an extremely stompy little woman named Roberta, apparently utterly self-confident, whom I liked and wanted to be friends with consciously because I was wanting to be sisterly and about whom I immediately had an erotic dream. What was hard to handle wasn't the dream, it was that she didn't seem to like me at all, would hardly speak, just barely be polite in response to me, ignore me completely if I didn't say anything to her. Roberta put my poem in the worst spot on the poetry page, laughed at something on one of my page layouts when the whole group was discussing the pages — I don't know if she knew I'd done that one but it stung, and I think I blushed. I went into the other room and after a little while left. I thought now while writing "Oh goddamn, all I need are those blood brown round crepe-soled shoes with plaid laces." Sure, sure I will stop feeling sorry for myself but I didn't make this up.

Dec 11



Just checking in. My final tests are approaching and I don't think I can write much in the next five days or so, in any case I don't intend to write tonight. I'm whirling in the most time-consuming and pointless kinds of romantic fantasising over Hilda. This is so silly I dislike writing it, however, that's what I've been doing. I went to see her again, which was a very good thing for me to do, and we went to hear some chamber music, which was a lovely thing to do. But so aware of her presence in the web of sound, and her quiet hands. I'd like if you have some specific suggestions on ways to redirect or, better, dissolve romantic fantasising.

Dec 15

Hilda stayed with me last night, and I feel calmer but with a new set of confusions. For which I'm trying to make no excuses. . . Hilda and I aren't communicating smoothly verbally yet, so of course not sexually either. I'm trying to say and be simple but fuck up: catch myself faking sexual reactions so she won't feel badly, pure projection, not being sure how much she wants to talk about it. I feel the rickety place in my communication. The games feel futile and tiresome at last with nothing left to win. Nice, anyway, to move snugly with another long female warmth, to have tomato juice and hold hands. We'll see if we can melt the rhyming walls I feel between us. Mine is fear and longing and loathing. Self. I feel a little irritable and the writing is making it worse: feeling how could anyone trust such a bundle of conflicts? Feeling how my moments of clarity evade me in the confusion of my reaction to another human.

Jan 1

Now. I'm as behind as can be. Happy New Year my dear.

Hilda will be home in the morning. At least partly to be with me. She pleases me so she pleases me so she pleases me so. Looking back over what I've written and haven't written in the last couple of weeks I realise I haven't kept up a very coherent narrative. Doubt that's important anyway. What I've done is fallen in love. I love it. I'm doing pretty well about keeping it in the present, but I certainly don't have my ego in any sort of order. For example, while we've been apart these ten days I'll find myself starting to fret that she doesn't really care for me, isn't yet aware of what a creep I really am underneath whatever it is that attracts her, will become bored with me sexually, and so on. That fear of rejection is so strong. I expect it's because however much and in whatever ways I love anybody I never love them anything like I love me. And the me in that sense is the wobbiest, least functional part of me, that spoiled little brat of an ego.

I remember you saying last summer that you wanted to learn to do it yourself, without falling in love. I understand that better now. This stage of love is a terrific energiser. To reject it would be like rejecting spring, I can't do that, it's too sweet. But it's so unpredictable and ephemeral. Oh, I wish I thought it could last, this gentling delight in another person that so smoothes and eases everything.

There's something less pretty I want to talk about a bit because I'm rather upset and ashamed about it. Last summer, about the time I was seeing you, I struck up a conversation or two with a man in our building. He's a black man named Hercules who's a counsellor for student athletes in the counselling center. I found him very charming and likeable and attractive for a man. I'm sure in retrospect that I was sexually attracted to him — which I didn't confront at all — because I remember it crossing my mind after you did my chart and told me I might have a child how beautiful mulatto children often are, and briefly fantasising about using Hercules as a father.

At that time Hercules suggested we have lunch together sometime and I said fine, but that never happened and I didn't think much about it. During finals week Hilda and I slept together every night and met every day for lunch, it was a very good, if inefficient, time. I find I am coming out, with joy and trepidation coming out, and it's good and proud and giddy to hold hands with her on the street. One of these days we were standing by the door of the college holding hands and making arrangements to meet later, saying goodbye; we finished, I patted her cheek, went inside, started up the stairs and then heard a voice behind me. It was Hercules, we chatted for a minute, he suggested I come up to his office for coffee that afternoon, I said OK, and did. He had been curious about me and Hilda. I told him I was in love, in short tried to respond as I would to a woman I was making friends with. However the signals were all there and I should have picked them up, and that I didn't is probably not entirely naive, though it is partly that — I haven't tried to make any kind of friends with any man for years. He told me he had not only liked me but felt attracted to me, and that my being a lesbian wouldn't change that, and I chose to listen to the half about it not changing his liking me, chose to assume that my being frank about being a lesbian would make me clearly unavailable, not a sex object. I had heard that men are sort of morbidly fascinated by gay women, consider them challenges to be saved, but I thought that was an exaggeration and only the sickies would give you that kind of trouble. Well, Hercules said he'd like to get together for a drink during vacation while Hilda would be out of town anyway and I said fine. We did meet for a drink Saturday night, and as I imagine you can imagine — sometimes I see your wise, small smile as you read about my foolish, self-deceptive behaviour — it was pretty ghastly. He put a lot of pressure on me, talked almost entirely about sex and how he didn't think I was really a lesbian. None of that pressure — bullying more drinks, more time, more, more, more — is fair, but I was stupid not to face the signals I was responding to and producing. I am a flirt, I love to flirt, I always have. But it's really no fun with men, they seem to have no wit and lightness about them.

Hilda called Sunday morning. I was feeling filthy. I'd had more than I wanted to drink, stayed up later than I wanted to stay up, smoked a couple of cigarettes for the first time in five years, and said I'd see him again Monday to get out of a really sordid up-against-the-car scene in the parking lot. Hearing her sweet voice, seeing her happy, open face in my mind I felt that beastly circle break and I knew for sure all over again that I'm not ready, not strong enough for bisexuality, knowing that assumption of the god-given right and duty to bully just isn't a part of most women. Oh women women women Hilda Hilda Hilda.

I called Hercules Monday and told him I didn't want to see him



any more and he was all right about it. I think he's really a decent man. And I'm a crazy dumb learning woman. What I've learned from this is not only another range of reasons why I love women, but that man-woman social arrangements aren't anybody's rhetoric and if I want to stay out of these greasy situations I'd better stop holding hands and smiling modestly at everyone I think is nice.

Jan 2

I feel absolutely exuberant. I just got in from the first morning walk I've taken in a very long time, the first where I've been late enough to see the sunrise in longer still. Everything pleased me, there was a cat that threw himself into my arms in the street, long loose lines of power wires, clear orange light behind the fir-feathered east hills and birds playing out their night kinks, and oh the leaves are gone now after holding on so long and the trees are a whole new ball game to see out there, Anne. Wonderful twigs everywhere. Some very proper, some sort of down at the cuticles like my loose women willows, some dense, some incredible, spare. One of the first things I noticed when I looked up at the backlit hill was the sudden lit tracery of a deciduous tree here and there along the line of firs, and I wondered why I hadn't noticed that before. But of course it's because the leaves just went down a few weeks ago, in storms the week I was falling in love. Really you would have been ecstatic over this autumn.

Jan 7

Hilde is going to practise her cello. Her name is not Hilda it is Hilde, her name is Hildegard with a Danish pronunciation, she's in every way, even her name, original, exquisite. She is tuning her cello, I am typing, I love the theatre as well as the practice of our cohabitation. The bowed melody lilts, my typewriter clatters, there are wrong notes, there are pauses for words that come out clumsy. I am very happy. Blue lightning flashes and thunder outside. Last lightning storm — remember I wrote about it in late summer — I thought alone was the only way for me. And now I'm more irrationally than ever in love. Well, I don't really believe that about irrational. I feel better in love, more wholly, more sexually, more emotionally than I have before. But also more rationally. I think I see better than ever before the implications and consequences of my emotions and acts, see holes, traps, dangerous ways. I tried, we tried for a while to stay completely in the present, make no plans or promises, but that proved impossible. Still possible — in fact I really want it this way — to make no promises, to try and be committed to continual re-evaluation of whether we want to be together. But seems impossible not to want to be together in future time as well as present. Not to think about vacation trips and gardens and many more nights so snug and orange juice mornings like these.

Well, I haven't been doing much work of the difficult kind and frankly I don't feel like doing much tonight. I feel like feeling snug and self-indulgent and going to bed in a while. School starts tomorrow. There are places that aren't easy, that aren't flying free in my relationship with Hilde, understanding how I'm going to have to deal with my inclinations to panicky possessiveness and my sexual performance anxieties, and I'm sure there will be more trying places that I can't yet imagine. I think it's very likely this relationship will try and stretch and hurt and grow me.

I'm not abandoning work! But the music has stopped, I would like to finish this and send away a packet of what I have to you tomorrow — how I love you — and go to bed.

Jan 12

My life has changed so radically in the last month, in fact in the last week, it will be harder than ever to write now. But I want more than ever to do it. I want more than ever to do everything. I feel begun on an adventure great and cosy, both. Well, Hilde and I live together in this house ...

Jan 19

My very dearest Patricia,

Would you like to call me Alice Anne? It's my real name, and I'm just starting to use it again.

"In a fever or a great strain of exhaustion, or in love, all the resources of the body stretch out and expand and vibrate higher than in ordinary life." *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, Doris Lessing.

So, time for a brief essay on love — I can feel you softened, sweet, smiling from here. The vibrations are high, and you have found someone with whom you can make the great experiment: to practice undemanding and non-possessive love.

Being in love is really important because it's how we discover the way we are supposed to feel all the time! Love is like good health. Imagine the healthiest person you know — a rosy-cheeked Oregon farm boy from Vida, right? His healthiness radiates out from him in every direction.

And that's love when it really gets going, baby. It just flows out there and is reflected back from every surface it contacts. And you are getting a hit of what it feels like to be healthy now.

In your entry for Jan. 1 you are talking about your date with Hercules, you say "I thought that was an exaggeration and only the sickies would give you that kind of trouble." Flash! Flash! This all connects up with the "revulsion" for macho women. Let's work it out. I mean you're going to have to love men too, you know. No. Not live with them. Or fuck them. Or marry them, or anything else — but love them. So, how to get into this one? Wow! A black man, too — real dirty. And I understand they have great big penis's (plural?). A "big black buck" as my loving father would say.

The question is, what does it do for you to invite, be desired by, and finally reject, a "big black buck"? Don't be shy now, let's get to it — weren't you saying something somewhere about a fantasy union with a very "feminine" woman?

And so to Jung — it is very definitely time. Start with *Man and his Symbols*. Get the hardbound from the library if possible because the reproductions are so important. Just glance at the others and see if they're useful. Maybe take a look at the autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*.

What else. Yes. Roberta (Dec. 7). Funny that when someone else acts in a way that might be a little familiar to you, you get paranoid. Try some different ways of looking at that interaction and see if you can imagine other intentions on her part — other than expressing "distaste" for you. Maybe it would be useful to start separating *motivation* and *intentions* when you examine someone's behaviour.

It's a completely arbitrary assignment of meaning, but I do it this way. Eg: my friend Roger makes a special dinner of moules mariniere for me two weeks after I've recovered from a bout of food poisoning from eating moules. Intentions: to give me a nice dinner, reveal his culinary skill, make everybody happy and get some "strokes", as you say, in return. But motivations are complex, aren't they? A lot of self-destruct going on there. So which are you going to hook up with? Someone's intentions? Or are you going to give your energy to complex motivation patterns that are giving them a lot of trouble anyway? As you get your own shit together you make life better for everyone you contact by hooking up with what's best in them — get it? Be generous in your judgements — the worst you can be is wrong.

I can see you racing cars and eating raw meat.

I have been talking to a friend on *Spare Rib* about publishing this work in serial form. Think it over for a while. It seems to me it would be tremendously useful to women here struggling with the same bonds and forces (weren't you wondering how you would be giving it back?).

Ah my dear. I hope you will be willing to try this. Please don't forget to send me a photo. Perhaps of you and Hilde? My warmest regards to her.

xxxxxxx

Alice Anne

COMPLETE YOUR SET OF RIBS

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NEWS

'I am their mother, I care for them. They don't understand'

"I am their mother, I care for them, if they are here I can see them with my own eyes, if I eat they will eat. I could not send for them before because the landlords wouldn't allow children. Now I have got a house the Home Office won't let them in . . . I am the mother, they don't understand, I am the mother."

Mary Mathurin, who said that, is one of the many West Indian women whose children the Home Office is trying to keep out of Britain. Amrit Wilson investigates.

Mary is one of the victims of the legal sexual discrimination being practised by the British government. There are two reasons why her children are being excluded: firstly because she is black and secondly because she is unmarried.

In Britain an unmarried mother is held responsible for her child's upbringing. The father is under no obligation to look after or support the child. But the immigration laws disregard this. A black unmarried woman who wants to bring her child into this country has to prove either that she is 'solely responsible' or that 'family or other considerations make (the child's) exclusion (from the UK) undesirable'.

What this means in detail has been shown by Home Office rulings since the law came into force in 1971. 'Sole responsibility', for example, means not just total financial responsibility, but 'embodies thoughtfulness and care, moral responsibility more than anything else' and it requires 'cogent evidence of genuine interest in and affection for the child'.

The second aspect, that 'family or other consideration make exclusion undesirable',

Why are thousands of West Indian children kept from their mothers?

The 1971 Immigration Act stopped all further black immigration into the UK, and required the dependents of those already here to have Entry Certificates issued by British High Commissions before they could be admitted. The situation now is:

- * Wives, husbands, and legitimate children are made to wait years for Entry Certificates.
- * Children of unmarried mothers are not given Entry Certificates unless their mothers can prove sole moral and financial responsibility for their upbringing. This contrasts with the 1948 National Assistance Act which says that an unmarried mother has sole claim to her child. Thousands of West Indian children are kept from their mothers by this rule.
- * A government White Paper on immigration is due shortly. Are they going to change this racist and sexist law?

means that the child must be shown to be 'intolerably unhappy' in the West Indies. How obscene to have to prove such things in Court when you know that failure to convince could lead to a life-long separation from your child.

And it is easy to fail: Dolseta Hamilton was not allowed to bring her 12-year-old daughter Sonia in, simply because when Sonia had been unhappy in school in Jamaica she had arranged to have her transferred to her own old school without first visiting it herself. That was taken as a lack of interest and affection.

Donna Ogilvie was not allowed to bring her son because she could not show postal order counterfoils further back than 1969 to prove that she had always supported him financially. Looking through the records of the Joint Council for the Welfare of

Immigrants or the official United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service show endless stories of suffering and legal cruelty.

Cruelty or Oppression?

But this is not just cruelty, it is oppression. The 1971 Immigration Act is a direct attack on black workers, an attempt to threaten and harass them.

Of black workers in Britain, women have if anything been more militant than men. They have been increasingly active in strikes, and wage demands, refusing to accept the rotten conditions they are being offered. The Immigration Act is the government's weapon to crush these demands for justice.

Part of it is aimed specifically at unmarried women with children. These women came to Britain mainly in the sixties. Out of usually poor wages they

have managed to support their children in the West Indies. Now, finally, they have saved enough for airfares and a house. They have always hoped that one day their children would join them, that their lives would be unified again rather than cut off from an inaccessible past in another country. It is these hopes which the laws are destroying.

Factory Charge Hand

The struggle these women face is shown by the experience of Mary Mathurin. Mary is a charge hand in a factory. She came to Britain in 1962 leaving her two little girls of three and six with her mother in St Lucia. She regularly sent money home and wrote letters to them.

In 1970 her mother started writing to her asking her to come and take the children away. This was partly because of the overcrowded conditions in which they all had to live — eleven adults and several children in four rooms — and partly because Mary's stepfather had turned against the children. The children also kept writing to Mary asking her to come and take them away.

By 1972 Mary had saved enough for her fare to St Lucia and also for the children's airfares. She had also managed to get a council house. So she decided to go and fix things up.

In St Lucia she found her children extremely unhappy. 'Every day', she said, 'they would cry and say "Mummy, please take me away with you." I had sent money for them regularly but my mother had not used it to buy them things they needed. She asked me to take them away there and then.'

Mary applied for their entry to Britain and returning here hoped that they would be allowed to join her soon. Six months later, not having heard anything, she enquired at the Home Office and was told that her children had been refused entry.

According to the official

letter which she later received, she had not been able to provide sufficient evidence of 'sole responsibility' — she had only shown money order receipts over five years. That, the Entry Certificate Officer thought, was not enough.

Like so many others in her position, Mary's first reaction was disbelief. Gradually she realised that she would have to fight for what she had thought were her rights. She decided to appeal against the ECO's (Entry Certificate Officer) decision, and took her case to the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. The JCWI arranged, as is usual in such cases, for a social worker's report on the family in St Lucia. This report has taken nearly a year to arrive. At the appeal it will face the ECO's report.

Money Order Receipts

According to Sue Ashtiany, who handles hundreds of such cases at the JCWI, proving that the mother is solely responsible is very difficult. Most people do not think of keeping money order receipts or old letters for more than a few years. If by any chance they have kept them, they might still of course be turned down by the ECO and on appeal by the Adjudicator.

Winifred Stevenson was told, for example, that the postal order counterfoils she showed could easily have been pinched from any post office. Winifred came to Britain in 1964 and has since supported her son Eon and her father in Jamaica.

She has been trying since 1968, when Eon was only nine, to bring him into this country. At first her application was ignored. Then it was rejected by the ECO. When she appealed the Adjudicator swept aside all the evidence of sole responsibility and rejected the case.

The blatant injustice of Winifred Stevenson's case has been repeated in hundreds of others.

The ECO's (who are British civil servants posted in the West Indies) seem determined to harass these women. Whenever possible, they try to show that it is the putative father and not the mother who is responsible. Frequently he has never supported the children and has lost all contact with them.

The ECOs track him down and ask him whether he is not a good father. They often trick him into saying that he retains an interest in the child and that can be enough for a refusal (The biased behaviour of the ECOs may seem surprising but it is characteristic of most people who work in Immigra-

tion Departments. When you find yourself forced to implement openly racist policies aimed at keeping out blacks, you either give up your job or wholeheartedly take up the racist line.)

'Intolerable Unhappiness'

If a mother can't prove that she has 'sole responsibility', she can try and show that her child is intolerably unhappy in the West Indies. That isn't easy either. According to a Home Office ruling a child's living conditions must be really bad — compared *not* to those of children in England but to the living conditions of his neighbours.

This is a racist principle since it suggests that a black child's standard of living can only be compared with those of other black children and not with what his mother wants for him in Britain.

But even proving that a child is worse off than her neighbours is sometimes not enough to satisfy the adjudicators. That is what happened in the case of 14-year-old Beverly Morgan.

After her grandmother — her guardian in Jamaica — died, she was taken into care and then placed with foster parents who ill-treated her. She was obviously in a much worse position than most other children in Jamaica but the adjudicator rejected the appeal with the comment:

'The appellant's serious allegation of misconduct on the part of her foster mother's husband must obviously be investigated by the appropriate authorities in Jamaica . . . and I presume that if they are substantiated in any material degree she will be removed to an alternative place of safety. I cannot however accept that this is a matter of direct relevance for the appellant's claim for entry.'

The fact that Beverly's mother had become mentally disturbed because of the separation was not considered relevant either. 'In this regard I cannot find the doctor's opinion that the presence of the appellant would assist Miss Morgan's recovery to be in itself of sufficient weight to justify an exception being made to the general rule.'

How long will this brutality continue? If Roy Jenkins really wants to abolish sexual discrimination, let alone racial discrimination, he must change this aspect of the Immigration Act. With a government White Paper on immigration due shortly this is the time to urge him to do so. Unmarried mothers must be allowed to bring their children into Britain as a matter of right. □

'It's my body not James White's'

In Spare Ribs 32, 34-37, we traced the progress of James White's Bill from its seemingly auspicious beginnings under the impetus of a powerful Catholic lobby, to its imminent collapse under the weight of the exposure of Babies for Burning and the wrath of women in the Labour Party and the Women's Movement. Now read on . . .

MPs Get The Message

"Mr Ian Wigglesworth said attitudes towards the proposed measure among MPs — including

WOMEN'S SONGS
for the

**MARCH AGAINST
James Whites'
anti-abortion bill
JUNE 21st 1975**



his own — had changed and he did not think it would ever become law . . . The situation had changed since the Bill was drafted . . . Claims about the effects of the 1967 Act, he said, had been shown to be dishonest. 'Only the tiniest reforms are now justified' he added." *Middlesburgh Evening Gazette*, June 9.

Mr Ian Wigglesworth, the Labour and Co-operative MP for Thornaby, voted for James White on February 7, but, like an increasing number of other MPs with majorities of less than 5,000, he is unlikely to vote for him again. Mr Wigglesworth said "the situation had changed since the Bill was drafted". He said this to his

local group of 'A Woman's Right to Choose' when they came to see him in order to hand over their petition against White's bill. He is right. The situation has changed.

The voice of women has now made itself heard loud and clear in the Labour movement, in the Co-operative movement, within the trade unions, and amongst trades councils all over the country. It has damned James White's bill. White could have discovered all this for himself last winter, if he had bothered to consult the women. Instead he consulted the Glasgow Catholic Hierarchy. So now he is learning the hard way, in the full glare of publicity.

It will be quite a long time before his Labour Party colleagues forgive him the embarrassing fracas he has caused. The Labour Party has enough problems in Scotland, without antagonising a sizeable body of its women supporters. Glasgow has more social and economic problems than any city in Britain.

This is what James White was sent to Westminster to deal with — not to drive women back into the arms of the criminal abortionists.

"The irony of the situation is that in Scotland the Act works well and there are virtually no abuses of it. Very few terminations are done privately, the vast majority being at NHS hospitals. It is also strange that in Glasgow, where it is difficult in some areas for GPs to obtain termination for their patients, MPs of this city should be initiators and supporters of the Bill. One of the problems in Glasgow is that many women have to be sent by their doctors to places such as Liverpool, Birmingham and Brighton to obtain terminations because of difficulty in the city . . . If Mr White's bill goes through the position would become even more difficult all over the country."

Which dangerous radical figure wrote the above lines? M.C. Macnaughton, professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at the University of Glasgow, in the *Glasgow Herald* on June 9.

strated on behalf of their patients. A group of young doctors held a sit-in at the British Medical Association — an event so startling that it was reported in every newspaper in the country. Why, they asked, had the BMA not spoken out against James White?

The interesting fact is, and this is new too, that the BMA had produced a surprisingly radical Report on White's bill. It was published on June 12, as soon as it had been approved by the appropriate BMA conference, where, astonishingly enough, only 4 out of 360 family doctors opposed it, even though it trounced White's bill almost clause by clause. In face of the disapproval of the Department of Health, the Home Office and the BMA, there is a united front against White spanning the Establishment and Anti-Establishment.

But James White and Leo Abse need not despair. They still have five allies left — the Roman Catholic Church, the Police, the Housewives League, the National Front — and the (presumably male) students of Llandaff Theological College, who dissociated themselves from the National Union of Students' stand against James White's bill.

As the situation deteriorates for the anti-feminist lobby, increasingly desperate publicity stunts abound. The latest is the Great Catholic Conscience Stunt obediently publicised in the *Evening News*, *Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and Catholic press in early June.

This is how it went. The

Guild of Catholic Doctors put it about that the Department of Health had suddenly ordered a 'ban' on the employment of their members in gynaecological units. What had actually happened was that as long ago as February 19 the Department of Health, in response to a request from the Joint Consultants' Committee, had published guidance to the effect that in those areas where patient care was suffering and the legitimate demand for NHS abortion was not being met due to a concentration of doctors with conscientious objections to abortion, new appointments must specify that abortion was part of the job.

'Unfair', howled the Guild, this ruling will impede our career prospects. (There are still, however, any number of vacancies in the specialities of geriatrics and mental handicap for those who seriously rate The Sanctity of Life above careerism.) Watch out for the next stunt any minute now.

Serpentine Twist

On 27 May, *The Guardian* reported that the Serpentine Press, publishers of *Babies for Burning*, had been put into the hands of a Receiver. "Mr Allan Larmouth, owner of Serpentine, has been reported as saying: 'If we were to lose any legal case, we would go bankrupt'." No comment. □

Liz Warren

Correction: In issue 37 Michael Litchfield, one of the authors of Babies for Burning, was wrongly referred to as Peter Litchfield.

National Movement Emerges
Another way in which the 'situation has changed' is that the National Abortion Campaign now has groups in all parts of the country. This is a striking new development. In the old days the Abortion Law Reform Association, despite its best efforts, hardly existed north of Birmingham. Now, awareness of and militancy about the abortion issue has spread all over Britain. Latest news is that a campaigning women's group has come into existence in Northern Ireland. The writing is well and truly on the wall.

In the July issue of *Family Planning* (published by the FPA) Madeleine Simms analyses the impact of James White's bill on the development of the women's movement in Britain. She notes the paradox that the women's movement owes a great deal to White. Without his stark anti-feminist measure, the movement would have taken years to develop the cohesion, political sophistication and

discipline that it has so quickly attained in the face of this blatant threat to the freedom and equality of women.

She is anxious that the head of steam generated over the abortion bill should not be dissipated when this particular piece of legislation has been defeated, and is concerned that the women's movement will turn its attention and new-found political sophistication to the many other issues that vitally affect the quality of life of women in this country: the Law Lords' ruling on rape, the implementation of the sex-discrimination legislation and the Finer Report, the wider provision of refuges for battered women, and many more. If all this comes about, "James White will truthfully be able to claim at least some of the credit for forging the women's movement into an instrument of political power."

Doctors Demonstrate

The situation has changed in another respect too. For the first time, doctors have demon-



Defeat the Abortion (Amendment) Bill Rally in Hyde Park, June 21

Philippa Steele

NEWS

In recent months actions taken by women workers have increased. Although the TUC has been working towards equal pay for 100 years, women workers are often isolated and are still in desperate need of support and union experience.

Photo story on eight women's strikes by Angela Phillips and John Sturrock (Report)

FROM THE SHOP FLOOR

REGRADE FOR EQUAL PAY IN COVENTRY

At the end of April 700 clerical workers, mainly women, at Dunlops in Coventry came out on strike for £15 across the board, a claim which would bring their pay up to that of manual workers. They had the power to bring all the Dunlop factories in Coventry to a grinding halt and precipitated the 12,500 lay-offs at British Leyland. With strength like that why didn't they win?

Within the first week the officials of APEX and ACTSS had reduced the claim to £10. By the third week they were saying that £8.50 was the maximum offer they could expect. At this time the management offer was for £7.35 — £8.51 for the men and only £7.00 for the women. This offer was to be conditional on a regrading scheme which would put the bulk of the women workers into a special 'O' grade below all the existing grades.

The strikers were advised to reject the offer, which they did. Five days later another offer appeared. This time it was produced in a detailed five-page document which nobody had time to read before voting. The officials presented the offer as a victory and were adamant that nothing could be gained by staying out.

In the confusion that followed most people put their trust in the negotiating committee, all of whom were backing a return to work and acceptance of the



Engineering workers at Nettles, Stockport, listen to union reportback

EQUAL PAY SUCCESS IN STOCKPORT

Tight organisation with plenty of local support on the picket lines lead to a victory at the Nettle engineering factory in Stockport. In March the 180 workers came out on strike in support of an equal pay claim.

The strike lasted only nine days, and even several of the temporary workers came out and were persuaded to join the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers. Equal pay was won with no strings attached and since returning to work they have also won an agreement for a closed shop.

There have been very positive repercussions locally. With the example of Nettles to follow, women at Bowbros Ltd were also able to win a strike for equal pay.

document. It wasn't until later that they realised what those five pages contained.

The major difference between the two offers was that the name of the new grade was changed from 'O' to 'A', and the basic payment was rounded up to £8. For the women, however, £1 of that £8 was an instalment from their equal pay award in November.

More important, the grading puts women at £2.15 below the men on the same grade. The few token men who have been pushed into the bottom 'women's grade' have been given an extra £1 to keep their pay up to its previous level, PLUS a £1.15 assimilation payment to make up for the shame of sharing the bottom rung with women.



Mass meeting at Dunlops reads documents produced by the negotiating committee in mid-May

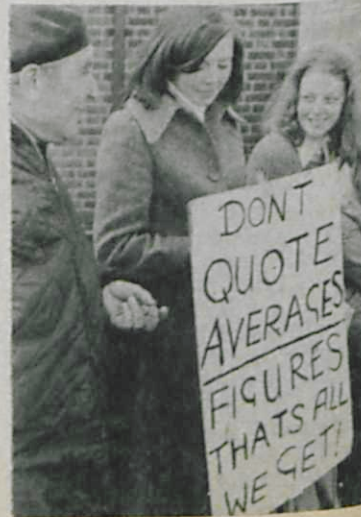
VICTORY IN COALVILLE

Clerical workers at Pegsons, Coalville were in a very similar position to those at Dunlops — but they won. They too had demanded that their last pay awards should be brought in line with the awards to shop floor workers. AUEW members had been offered between £6.50 and £8 a week and the clerical members of APEX demanded that their derisory offer of £3 to £4 should be increased to £6. With pay of £21 in lowest grade the women were not exactly asking for the moon.

All the clerical staff in the factory belong to APEX. With only one union involved the negotiations were simpler and the workers were very well supported by their union with official backing from the start and strike pay of £11 at the later stages of the dispute. Reasonable strike pay is of course essential for low paid workers.

There was some help from engineers in the factory, but the major source of support came from the clerical workers throughout half a dozen Bentley engineering factories.

APEX strikers at Pegsons at the end of April



SACKING AT LEVI STRAUSS, LANARKSHIRE

Next time you ease yourself into a slightly too tight pair of Levis spare a thought for the women who make them. 350 machinists at the Levi-Strauss factory in



Flora Flynn

Whitburn, Lanarkshire returned to work in the middle of June after a ten week strike.

The strike was over the sacking of convenor Flora Flynn, who has not been reinstated. It was the culmination of months of frustrating negotiations over job definition — the work arriving from the cutters in Glasgow was so bad that they had to trim each pair of jeans by hand before they could sew them. This slowed down their work and reduced their earnings. Flora Flynn took the matter up and the women were paid a reasonable rate but it still did not solve the cutting problem.

Management finally provoked action by calling for a shop floor ballot over who should deal with the problem, management or union — a direct attack on union organisation. In an argument with one of the supervisors

Flora Flynn solved the problem by throwing the ballot box out of the window and, within a few hours, was sacked. All the women, members of the Tailor and Garment Workers Union, walked out in support.

For the first four weeks the strike was unofficial so there was no strike pay. This was particularly hard on the fourteen unsupported mothers, who were forced to pay £3 a week to keep their places at the jointly owned council/Levi nursery, and who got no sympathy from Social Security. All women are at a disadvantage in strike situations because married women cannot claim at all and single women may only claim for their children.

When the Tailor and Garment Workers Union made the strike official the women were receiving only £3 a week. The union

promised to double the pay but at the same time pointed out that if any of the other Levi factories came out they would be unable to keep paying the higher rate. This provided a disincentive for what could have been their strongest weapon in the strike.

One of the sister factories had already expressed its willingness to support them, and if the union had given them more help they could well have called out the three Levi factories in the area.

Without vital support from other Levi factories the strike was slowly eroded. Now all the women have returned to work to face a threatened speed-up on the lines without Flora Flynn. Now the women have the task of rebuilding their union and shoring up their morale for the battles ahead.



Walters and Dobson strike, with leader Carol White (right)

ACTION TOO LATE IN CHESTERFIELD

"Wage increases are a major source of inflation and we think that the claims of our work force are against the country's interest." Those were the words of Walter and Dobsons managing director Healy, who refused to pay the second instalment of an AUEW national engineering agreement which would have brought the wages up to the minimum £26.50 a week.

Walters and Dobson were a tightly organised factory, but the management were determined to hold out and break the union organisa-

tion and they succeeded. After eleven weeks on strike most of the women trickled back to work. The convenor was sacked and many of the more militant women refused to return.

No support was organised in the area by the local official. By the tenth week the women themselves had started organising backing, and they gained support from the Sheffield district AUEW committee. Local miners and engineers organised a demonstration, but the direct action came too late.▷

STANDBY FORKLIFT DRIVERS BLOCK EQUAL PAY AT TETLEYS, BLETCHLEY

At the end of May 350 workers at the Tetleys Tea factory in Bletchley began an occupation with a march round the local housing estate. They were demanding a rise of £6 across the board, equal pay, and a threshold agreement.

By June 7 the occupation was over with a settlement of £5.81 across the board. But £1 of the women's money came off their November equal pay award and the men got an extra £1 bonus — as standby forklift truck drivers!

Lyons Tetley Tea workers march for equal pay on May 22

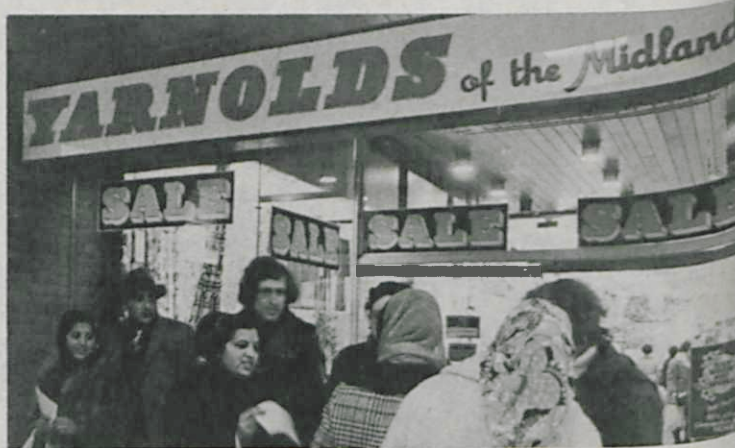


VICTIMISATION AT YARNOLDS, WOLVERHAMPTON

Women at Yarnolds Textile factory joined the Transport and General Workers Union in an attempt to improve their pay, which was only £13 for a 40-hour week. The management moved in immediately and sacked both the shop stewards, Josie Bradley and Carol Price. A strike was called just before Christmas last year, but after 20 weeks ended in defeat.

The problems faced by these women, who included a number of Asians, are common to the problems in many small firms with a predominantly female labour force, with no experience of union organisation and little encouragement, and in this case communication was hampered because of language problems.

Day-to-day planning was left to the stewards and the union officials. The women on strike were not given any guidance in organising basic support action such as pickets or raising money or support from local factories. This lack of involvement means the women return to the same inhuman conditions at work with no union organisation, massive loss of morale and precious little experience to help them the next time around.



Yarnolds workers picketing Wolverhampton shops

REINSTATEMENT AT HAMPTON STAMPINGS, BIRMINGHAM

"We've been treated like dirt — this is why we want a union", said Wendy Shield, who was made redundant after joining the AUEW.

"It's a well-known fact that small firms like ours are reluctant to recognise trade unions and it is obvious why. The management try all the time to divide and rule us by giving different prices on their jobs and favouring some with good jobs". The power press operators at Hampsons were getting an average wage of £15 for a 30 hour-week.

Earlier this year women in the factory began to organise secretly in the AUEW until the management found out, sacked one woman and made nine others 'redundant'. The 22 other union members came out on strike demanding reinstatement.

This time the organisation was successful. The engineering union immediately made the strike official and with help from other trade unionists the women



Hampton Stampings picket in Birmingham on April 21

went round local factories, gathering support, particularly from Lucas, British Leyland and Rover.

After six weeks the manage-

ment agreed to recognition and reinstatement of the nine, but would not budge on the sacked worker. However the women decided to return to work,

realising that it was more important to keep their unity solid and direct their energy to organising 100% unionisation. □

CHINESE BIRTH CONTROL: EATING THE CALENDAR

During International Women's Year the Family Planning Association is holding a series of lunch-time talks. On June 21 Graham Leonard, advisor on education to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, gave a talk entitled 'The Chinese Experience: Successful Birth Planning is Dependent on the Emancipation of Women'.

In the campaign around planning production and reproduction the popular slogan is 'one is best, two is enough, three is too many'. Now there are attempts in many areas of China to have community birth planning. By studying the local production plans, local birth planning committees (made up of people living and working in the area) draw up forecasts over a ten year period of how many babies their community can support.

Support, Care and Concern These 'plans' are not sent down from above. Women discuss the birth planning plans and decide when they want and who should have babies over a period of years. In the two areas Graham Leonard visited about 10% of the women produced babies out of turn. No one gets into 'trouble' if this happens.

'Attempts to correct this are done through intensified education about the needs of all the people and the importance of overall planning of every aspect — material production as well as human reproduction', Graham Leonard said.

This involves what the Chinese people call the 'four legs birth planning stands on'. These are the direct medical areas — doctors, clinics, hospitals, etc; the women's organisations; socialist adult education; and the specific birth planning organisations. All four areas of organisation work in contact with each other in order to 'serve the people'.

At the FPA talk some people seemed upset by the idea of group birth planning but I thought that was because it was such a strange and new idea to them. Here, we have to make individual decisions and plans. One of the main criticisms of child bearing and rearing here is that it is such an isolated and

lonely business. In Chinese communities everyone knows there will be support, care and concern about each baby born and about each woman who bears a child.

Eat the Calendar

Dr. Leonard gave information which there isn't room for here about creches, marriage,



etc. On contraception he specifically talked about the Chinese paper pill, which was developed in 1972 and made from Chinese materials. You can write the dates on these paper pills and 'eat the calendar'.

This pill is much lighter in steriods than the pills in the west. It is claimed that this is possible because Chinese women are lighter in body weight than western women. However it seems more important that the Chinese are willing to

accept a 2% to 3% failure rate in order to have a safer pill, and back this up with freely available suction abortion on demand.

When he asked about the development of a male pill some women told him that they still wanted to keep birth control in their possession. They said it might be another generation until they could completely trust the men to take the pill. The Chinese people are still progressing towards complete equality between men and women and not all men are completely re-educated yet.

Graham Leonard's conclusion was that equality for women is 'both an objective of birth planning in China and also one of the means by which birth planning is achieved. No one claims that equality has yet been achieved but all that I met insisted that this was the ultimate goal of both sexes in China.'

Do Feelings Fall from the Sky?

Dr Leonard's talk illustrated for me the difficulty sympathetic western visitors to China have when talking about China. His information was interesting and sensitive to the Chinese people's attitudes and feelings. However, when asked *why* and *how* China was so successful in its campaigns and programmes on birth planning, he spoke of spirit, enthusiasm and excitement. He said people in China are dedicated to making their

country work and develop. People feel that they belong; they have pride and satisfaction in belonging to groups and from doing 'whatever the people need'.

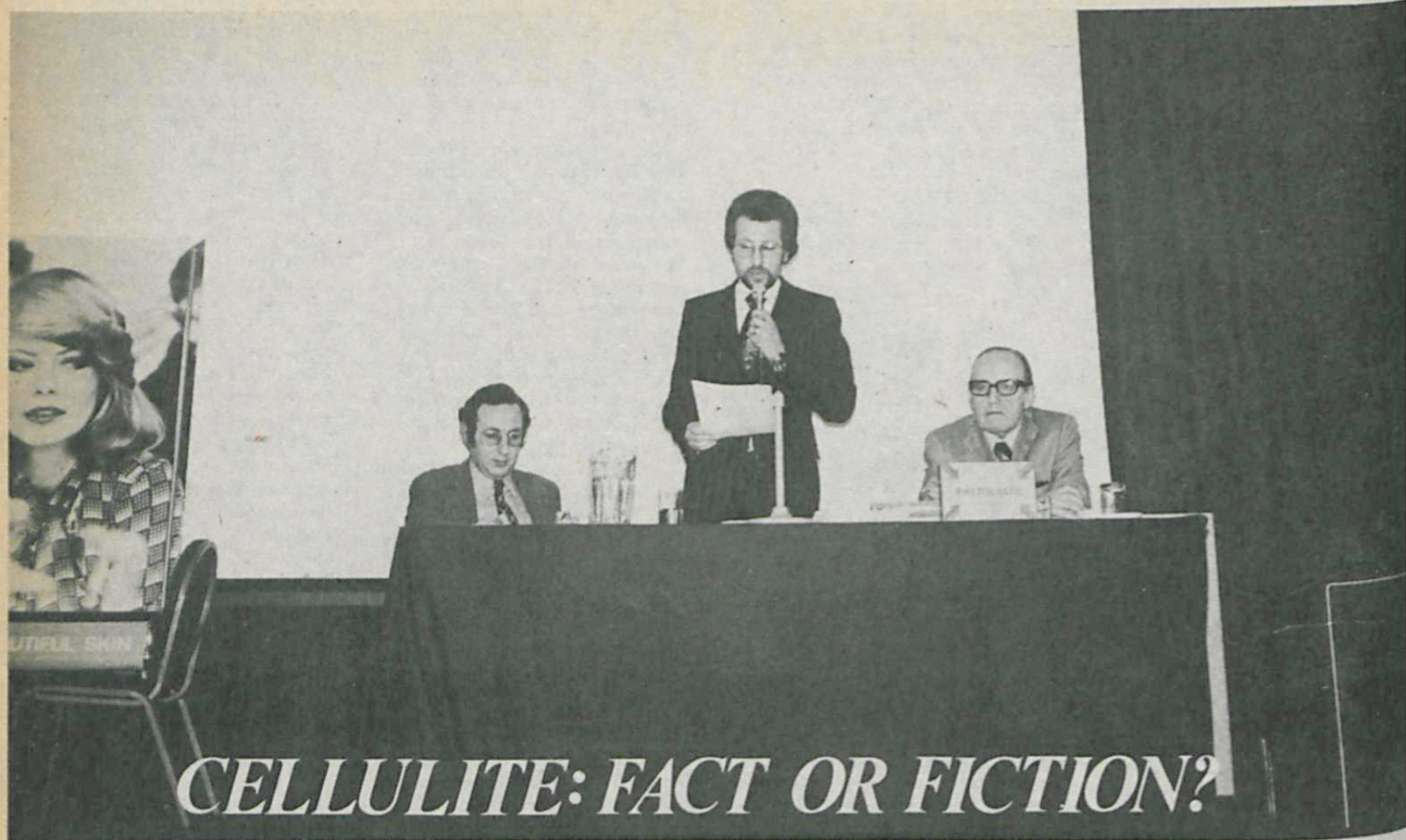
I don't disagree with any of the things he said. What I do think he left out are the actual root causes of all he has described. Feelings don't fall out of the sky. In China the root cause is socialism. Socialism which is linked to the specifics of the Chinese situation — but as much as many westerners would like to get away from it, Chinese socialism isn't some peculiarity of Mao's mind either.

The reason we in Britain don't have general enthusiasm and excitement and, specifically, successful birth planning isn't because some arbitrary someone or something hasn't come along to inject us with 'spirit'. How can we democratically 'plan' births when we are a million miles away from 'planning' our economy democratically, or for that matter any other area of our life?

Eventually people who are interested in and want to understand China will have to come to terms with the fact that socialism is fundamental to all areas of life in China. □

Sue O'Sullivan





CELLULITE: FACT OR FICTION?

Kings of the Slimuthise industry (left to right): Malcolm Lyons, director, Anglo-Swiss Pharmaceuticals Ltd; L.F. Harding, 'owner' of the only chemist to sell Slimuthise; W.E. Arnold-Taylor, medical consultant to Anglo-Swiss. Phytolastil is a plant product that 'gets rid of stretch marks'.

Under the protective guise of 'Slimming for Health' the slimming industry not only reinforces, but also cashes in on the idea that a woman's main task on earth is to be physically pleasing.

Indeed to crown its short and inglorious history, the industry has given birth to a new social disease: 'cellulite'. Cellulite, according to the adverts, afflicts the unfortunate bodies of over 90% of European women. It consists of "those fat-gone-wrong deposits that cling to your waist, hips and thighs, that diet and exercise cannot remove".

Strictly speaking we ought to thank the French slimming industry for our recent inheritance of cellulite. In 1949 a percipient French doctor, Louis Alquier, saw what no-one else has ever been able to see, and named it cellulite. The market has been booming ever since. There isn't a pharmacy in France that does not sell at least ten different anti-cellulite or 'thinning' products. You can even buy anti-cellulite soap to help you slim while you wash.

Cellulite enjoys some support within the French medical establishment. But Marian Apfelbaum, a professor of nutrition in Paris, is not among

the believers: "Cellulite does not exist. It was invented by those who want to fool women into phoney treatment."

Slimuthise

In this country the only true cellulite cognoscenti are women's magazines like *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*, who have recently advocated treatment. Most British doctors seem blissfully unaware of this dreadful scourge. But Dr Margaret Ashwell of the Medical Research Council's nutrition unit at Northwick Park Hospital has heard of cellulite. It first aroused her interest when she attended two press conferences organised to promote an anti-cellulite product called Slimuthise (pronounced Slim-u-thighs). It is marketed by Anglo-Swiss Pharmaceuticals Ltd who have the sole distributing rights for Slimuthise in this country.

The concept of cellulite puzzled Margaret Ashwell so she wrote to Anglo-Swiss suggesting that her MRC unit might conduct a controlled trial to test the efficacy of Slimuthise. Her letter went unanswered so she went ahead on her own.

She based her experiments on the French medical definition of cellulite: an overgrowth of

connective tissue beneath the skin in which the main chemical constituent — mucopolysaccharide — becomes over-polymerised (overgrown); these polymers then form tough gelatinous envelopes that trap water and 'toxins' (medical term for poisons) which the body cannot eliminate. If this definition is correct, cellulite areas should boast a far larger proportion of connective tissue and water than non-cellulite areas.

Margaret Ashwell selected fifteen women volunteers who considered themselves to be 'bottom-heavy'. About half were within 10% of their normal body weight and the rest ranged between 10–50% above normal. She compared the ratio of the constituents in needle biopsies (samples of live tissue). One was from a non-cellulitic area (usually the lower arm) and one from a supposedly cellulitic area (usually the thigh). She found no differences whatsoever. Conclusion: Cellulite does not exist.

Medical Respectability

Most anti-cellulite treatments are based on breaking down the overgrown (over-polymerised) connective tissue, thereby

releasing the trapped water and mythical toxins. A French company, Laboratoire Solac — the parent company of Anglo-Swiss — developed an enzyme, which they call Thiomucase, which allegedly does exactly this.

Slimuthise is the English brand name for Thiomucase. It is sold here on prescription only, although beauticians appear to be able to buy it directly from Anglo-Swiss without going through a doctor first. By selling it on prescription only, Slimuthise has acquired the medical respectability that cosmetic products do not possess.

At least six British GPs give Slimuthise injection therapy — for those who are sufficiently gullible and affluent. One London GP runs a 3–6 week course which costs up to £150. All women receive simultaneous diuretic treatment (which promotes water loss). Harold Shapiro, a Manchester GP, who has used Slimuthise, is dubious of its success: "I wonder", he says, "How effective Slimuthise would be if I omitted the diuretic?" As 70% of our body weight is water, it is hardly surprising that a daily diuretic will cause significant weight loss.

Bobbi Jacobson

CLASSIFIEDS

GROUPS

Bath Women's Group welcomes new members. Every Tuesday 8pm. Basement Flat, 13 Johnstone Street Bath. Tel: Bath 20254. Also Free Pregnancy Testing Service Available.

HALIFAX HEBDEN BRIDGE TODMORDEN area any groups? or anyone wanting to form one? contact Elaine, Calder Valley 3943.

WOLVERHAMPTON. Anyone interested in forming a group phone Yvonne, Pattingham 674.

Sudbury/Ipswich area anyone interested in starting group. Contact Valerie, Boxford 210707.

TWICKENHAM new group starting. Phone Linda 898 4404 or Janey 892 1770

Homosexual/Bisexual women join the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. CHE is your voice — make it louder! Meetings and socials throughout Britain. Send SAE 9 x 4" to CHE (332) 28 Kennedy Street, Manchester 2.

BOOKS ETC

LITTLE GIRLS BY ELENA GIANNINI BELOTTI. Belotti describes the process of social conditioning which forces children to conform to their stereotypical sex roles from the first days of life — and even before. Her observations are based on day-to-day contact with children and their parents as Director of the Montessori Centre in Rome. She presents her arguments in a clear and direct fashion. Available in September from Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 14 Talacre Road, London NW5 3PE 85p + 15 p&p.

Trevor Pateman's Language, Truth and Politics: Towards a Radical Theory for Communication, attempts to construct a theoretical framework within which forms of repressive, alienating and mystifying discourse, including those to which women are peculiarly subject can be understood and combatted. Available now, 112 pages paperback, £1.50 post free from Jean Stroud and Trevor Pateman, (SR) 1 Church Green, Newton Popleford, Sidmouth, Devon.

Anti-Apartheid News, Journal of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. The only newspaper devoted to reporting the facts of the situation in Southern Africa, and the campaigns being waged internationally against white supremacy. Ten issues per year, annual subscription rates £1.35 UK from 89 Charlotte Street, London W1P 2DQ.

New Design WL Badge 14p (incl. postage). Stop Rape American pamphlet on self-defence for women (illustrated) 26p (incl. Postage) from Sisterhood Books c/- 22 Great Windmill St, London W1.

NATIONAL LESBIAN NEWS-LETTER first issue out now—with news, views and group ideas and information needed now for next issue. Subs £1 a year, Maggie Sellers, 3 Dunlop Ave, Lenton, Nottingham.

FOR GAY WOMEN: THE GIRL'S GUIDE 1975. The all new, pocket size, discreet, international bar/club guide and complete directory of organisations, centres, publications etc. All Britain plus 25 other countries. 1500 listings, £1.00 only from: The Girl's Guide, 103 Hammersmith Rd, London W14 (mail order only). Also at: Compendium, 240 Camden High St, NW1; Sterling's Bookshop, 57 St Martin's Lane, WC2; Karmac Books, 56 Gloucester Rd, SW7. And on sale at the SAPPHO discos.

SAPPHO, the only lesbian feminist magazine in Europe. 40p inc post. 39 Wardour Street, London W1V 3HA. Meetings held every Tuesday, 7.30pm upstairs room, The Chapstow Pub, Chapstow Place, London W2, off Westbourne Grove 40p admission for non-subscribers.

Women's Liberation Literature or any books. Send SAE for free booklist to H. Rutovitz, 31 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh.

Women and Socialism Conference Papers 3 — available from Jill Lampert, 26 Lonsdale Rd, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9RA. 35p + 12p p&p.

PERSONAL

FEMINIST 31, wishes meet similar for 2/3 week holiday August/September preferably Crete (or other Greek Islands) Margaret 452 6755 (evenings)

Young couple would love to adopt baby write Carla Box no. 381.

Female 18, seeks new friendships and interests (London) Box no. 375

STOKE man 26 seeks friendship liberated woman. Lover of children animals, music and outdoor activities. Marriage definitely out, but would consider equal share of responsibility of home with right person Box no. 363.

MAN, mid-thirties, many interests, writer, businessman, feels he would make a thoroughly bad father, but also feels he needs, and can give, a lot of love in the right marriage. Thinks he would relate best to girls in the 21-31 age range, who, like him do not need parenthood. Respects women's rights, expects them to respect his. Jeremy Ward, 21 Leyborne Avenue, Ealing, London W13 9RB

Femme lesbian (30-40) sought as permanent sister-friend-partner by similar masculine woman, anywhere ala BM/Sorella London WC1 6XX

ACCOMMODATION

Room in shared house £8.50 pw, ring Val or Gary Romford 21955 One girl to share ground floor flat. Own room. 185 Aldborough Road, Seven Kings Ilford Essex.

Modernised pied a terre WC1 semi-basement, bedsitter (wall bed, fitted carpets, curtains etc) bathroom, kitchen/pantry overlooking plant area. Leasehold 36 years £8,750. Enquiries 01-278 1501

PROFESSIONAL LADY willing to share flat/house easy access London Box No. 382.

Social worker and painter considering self sufficient community, based on agriculture like to hear from others with similar idea. Previous disastrous experience with dreamers, so no phantasies please. Write Jackie and Ivor, 17 Southfield Road, Clifton, Bristol.

WOMAN and two children want to change their isolated and unnecessarily expensive life style. ANY-ONE interested in exploring practical alternatives? Box no. 383

Gay woman, gay man and cat moving to London early September need friendly place to live. North London Marian 33 Primrose St, Lancaster.

JOBS

RED LADDER THEATRE wants actresses for work in touring collective based in the north, producing own material and performing to Trade Union and Community audiences. Commitment important. Equity membership and musical ability an advantage. Phone immediately if interested: 01-263 1053.

TRAVEL

ATHENS & EUROPE by coach from £19. Weekly departures. Phone 01-734 1127 Euro Express Lloyd Oxford Circus.

Guaranteed low cost jet flights Australia, New Zealand, Singapore Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Tokyo, Bangkok, India, Pakistan, Tehran, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Nairobi, Morocco, Tunis, Canary Islands Greece and rest of Europe. Jet-set Travel, 5th floor, 62 Oxford Street, London W1. 01-637 1971/580 3298

FILM

WOMEN AND FILM. Women in the Educational Advisory Service of the British Film Institute are compiling resources for groups working on Women and Film (also TV and the visual image in general) — including film study extracts, slides, documentation and a Women and Film Resources Handbook. We also intend to campaign for the availability of 16mm prints of films made by women — eg Dorothy Arxner's *Dance Girl Dance* (USA 1940) and Nelly Kaplan's *La Fiancée du Pirate* (France 1940). As a first step we are establishing a mailing list through which we can receive and send out information. For further details write to: Nicky North or Christine Gledhill, BFI 81 Dean Street, London W1V 6AA.

MUSIC

WOMEN'S ROCK BAND forming. Newcastle/Tyne. Sisters with equipment, money etc, please contact Newcastle Lesbian collective, 42 Cardigan Terrace, Heaton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 6.

FOR SALE

Quality canvas sabbags £14 natural £15 colour of choice removable cover ring Jane 352-1445.

WOMEN'S YEAR CARDS. Pack of 8 with envelopes 40p from Pyenest Centre Pyenest Road, Harlow, Essex.

SPARE RIB CARDS full details of women's centre on back pack of 10 with envelopes for 40p, from Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St, W1A

LOST CONTACTS

Niamh O'Sullivan please contact Rosie at Spare Rib urgently 01-437 2070.

Woman from Sheffield who replied to Box no. 341, please reply again

THERAPY

PRIMAL THERAPY write Jenny James, Atlantis, Burtonport, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Eire.

Woman psychotherapist (Jungian) now has vacancies Highgate area. Tel. 01-348 5593

Carlotta Palfi, psychotherapist English and German. Battersea Park. Tel. 01-720 1667

SERVICES

Female/female exclusive introductions highly confidential service for release, friendship liberation etc SAE — 'Lesbos and Ariadne', The Golden Wheel, Liverpool L15 3HT.

Homosexual women and men can ring Icebreakers on 01-274 9590 every evening of the year between 7.30 and 10.30 to talk over their problems with other gay people.

If you want to join or start a group, find work, a travel companion or a missing friend, start a household or share a house, have something to sell or swap... then run your own Classified Ad.

Copy date: August 1st for August 27th

Please send a large stamped envelope with all replies to box numbers.

Rates: 5p per word, 10p caps. £1 50 for semi-display (semi-boxed ad.) 50p for box numbers.

Payment: Ads. must be prepaid and sent to Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St., London W1A 4XS. Please make all cheques and PO's payable to Spare Ribs Ltd.

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Tick if Box No required

Tick if Semi-display required

I enclose £..... for..... no of issues.

Name:

Address:

Print your ad below in block capitals. one word in each box.

Underline any words you require in caps.

7		
10		
13		
16		
19		
22		
22		
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28		
31		
34		

WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT VIBRATORS

As the first company to introduce vibrators into the U.K. and having sold some hundred of thousands, we feel that we know more about them and their use than most.

The most important thing to remember is, **that they do work** — providing the woman has no violent prejudice against the use of artificial sexual stimulation. Some women find the shape off-putting. The phallic symbolism, deliberately created by the makers to emphasize its sexual usage, gives them the impression that it is meant to be used as an artificial penis, and indeed it can and is so used. Some women, however, find the effect — when used in this way — to be more numbing than stimulating.

The vibrator is designed and is far more effective when used for clitoral stimulation and its undoubted value for this purpose has been well established by Masters and Johnson in their book "An Analysis of Human Sexual Response." In the book they describe how, using a similar device, they were able to bring to orgasm women who have never before reached a climax.

These were extreme cases obviously. Normally, the vibrator is used to provide extra stimulation during love making and is particularly useful where the woman's response tends to be slow. And, of course, it is just as often used purely for personal pleasure.

Finally a word about quality. There are many different makes on the market today, all of similar design, ranging in quality from very good to absolutely useless. We have been selling the same model for seven years and have enough confidence in it to offer you our special 'money refund' service if you are not satisfied.

If you want to experiment with your own personal vibrator, just complete the coupon below.

Please send me a Harmony Personal Vibrator.
I enclose. Cheque/P.O./Cash for £3.50 (including postage and packing).

Name:

Address

Please
PRINT
Clearly

**Pellen Personal Products Ltd.,
Dept SR
1a West Green Road, London, N.15**

Balloons, Placards AND STICKERS

Seventy-five women artists armed with balloons, stickers and placards converged on the Hayward Gallery, London, one morning in June. They were protesting against the inequality of exhibition opportunities and lack of parity in the Arts Council's policies towards women.

What is the Arts Council's record where women are concerned? It's bleak. In 1972 their major contemporary art show, 'New Art', contained no work by women. In 1974, 'British Painting' included 56 men and four women. In this year's Hayward show, 'The Conditions of Sculpture', there are 37 men and four women, while the shows for younger artists at the Serpentine Gallery have work by only one woman.

Of course this is only the tip of a murky iceberg — but it's a significant tip, discouraging for women artists and misleading for everyone else. After all, at least 50% of the country's art students are women. Some argue that if women were 'good

enough' they'd be visible.

But as it is women artists are cut off from receiving constructive criticism, cut off from the incentive of communicating their ideas and cut off from the support and encouragement of seeing other women showing work.

Moreover, their absence from exhibitions is a professional and financial handicap, echoed in the lack of women teachers in fine art departments with the resulting lack of role models for women students.

After decorating the Hayward gallery with their stickers and balloons, the demonstrators handed in a petition at the Arts Council. They demanded:

- 1) That the state-administered museums and galleries should adopt a role of positive encouragement to women artists to overcome the centuries of damage, by establishing 50% representation in all future exhibitions.
- 2) That 50% representation should be established on all Arts Council selection panels.
- 3) That parity should be established with the granting of the new Arts Council artists' bursaries. □



EVENTS INCLUDE:
BRECHT AND CINEMA/
POLITICS AND FILM:
the films of
ALAIN ROBBE-GRIFFET,
MARTIN SCORCESE, SHUJI
TERAYAMA, JACQUES
TOURNEUR, NEW AMERICAN
INDEPENDENT CINEMA:
40 NEW FEATURES.

Information from:
Dept. M, Film House,
3 Randolph Crescent,
Edinburgh 3.
Telephone: (031) 225 1671

29th EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL.
August 24 - September 6 1975.

'Dependents Are A Drag'

Thirty-five women mounted a three-day vigil outside the Home Office in London from June 16 to 18 prior to the third and last reading of the Labour Government's Sex Discrimination Bill.

The women aimed to influence the 40 MPs — including five women — who had promised their full support to the Sex Discrimination Campaign.

"Dependants are a Drag, and Being One is a Bigger Drag", proclaimed one of the placards, in opposition to the Bill's omission of changes in women's dependence in taxation, social security and insurance legislation.

A complaint was subsequently registered with the Press Council about the *Daily Mirror's* reporting of the Campaign's activities and the women's movement's attitudes to the Bill.

The Campaign say that the paragraph "*Women's Lib has triumphed. Their fight for equality will soon be backed by the full weight of the law*" "not only lacks objectivity, but is positively misleading." □

DEMONSTRATING FOR A FINER FUTURE

Five thousand parents and children marched to Westminster on July 2 to demand action on the *Finer Report on One-Parent Families*, published in July 1974. They sought implementation of the recommendations for a cash allowance, a system of family courts, and better day-care and housing policies for one-parent families. Michael Meacher, Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, said resources were simply not available yet.

MEN TO LECTURE ON WOMEN'S COURSE?

The 32 students on the Women's Course at Middlesex Polytechnic, Hendon, had hoped to extend the course in the next academic year under organiser Stella Rosenak's direction.

There is now a possibility that the lectures will be organised and run by men and the women feel that Ms Rosenak is being victimised.

If so, they wrote to the Dean on June 17, they would organise

their own courses using the Polytechnic's facilities as they did in January (see *Spare Rib* 34).

Their letter notes the value of the lectures, which "together with the enormous advantage of creche facilities, have proved invaluable to us." □

SPECIAL EXPERIENCE OF ABORTION

By mid-July 170,000 people had signed the petition against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, and Leo Abse and James White had stated that it would take longer than expected to get through the evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee.

In this connection Bow GP David Rosewarne, a member of Doctors Against James White (see pp 18-19), pointed out that Eileen Fairweather (*Spare Rib* 36) was inaccurate in saying that the Select Committee would only take evidence from groups.

"I sent written evidence in March, and a woman from Pregnancy Advisory Service (Midlands) gave evidence as an individual at the end of June", he said.

When asked whether their professional status gave them any privileges, Dr Rosewarne said "Well, you could say that's someone with special experience, but then any woman who's had an abortion has had special experience." □

FREE PREGNANCY TESTS

Also Advice on Abortion, Full Fertility Control, and Vasectomy. British Pregnancy Advisory Service is a non-profit making registered charitable trust. Tel:

Birmingham (021) 643 1461

Brighton (0273) 509726

Leeds (0532) 443861

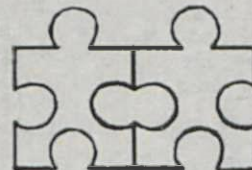
Liverpool (051) 227 3721

Manchester (061) 236 7777

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We're a unique dating service which caters solely for people who happen to be gay, in the most personal way we can: no names on circulatory lists; nothing so impersonal as that. No, with Gayway, you're not just a name, you're a person: and we'll tell you how we do it:

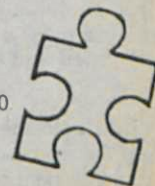
When you make your partnership with us (£7 annual membership) and send us one booth photo and a confidential letter all about yourself, and indications of the sort of gay woman that you'd like to meet, you get a personal letter back from us. And that way we're not only getting to know each other, but at the same time we're finding you your special gay friend.

You can trust us. You can trust Gayway to be honest with you, if you're honest with us. And we'll do our very best to find the sort of gay woman you have always been looking for.

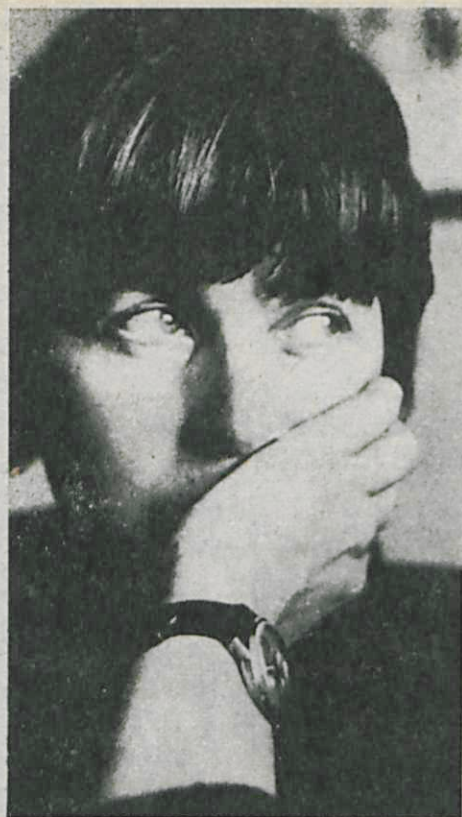
So, to make your partnership with us, send £7 membership crossed with Gayway, ... or send a first class stamp the first class way for first class details: it's not much effort coz we'll do the rest for you.

GAYWAY

77 Fortis Green Road, London N10
(NO CALLERS)



EVA FOREST: "FIRST FEEL, THEN THINK ABOUT IT"



Eva Forest de Sastre.

"I know only one thing with certainty. That they hate us." Eva Forest de Sastre sums up the attitude of the Spanish government to political dissidents, women, and intellectuals in her recently published prison letters and diary (*Diario y Cartas desde la Carcel*).

Only the fear of a desperate regime can explain the barbarous physical and mental torture to which Eva Forest was, and is, subjected. Authorities and the Spanish press have accused Forest and twelve others of plotting the assassination of Admiral Carrero Blanco in December 1973. Eva Forest denies this charge not only to the world but — almost more convincingly — to her children.

Censorship and concern for her 12-year-old daughter Eva prevent description of the seventeen interrogation sessions, the death/suicide threats, tufts of hair pulled out, the sexual abuses. But at one point in her diary she admits depression and alludes to a "catastrophe whose magnitude cannot be seen". This refers to the denunciation made against her and the others by the demented brother of Maria Luz Fernandez, another defendant. Eva moves quickly to Shakespeare, and explains how for the first time she has begun to recognise complex tragedy. Forest, like hundreds of others in Franco's jails, has been manipulated and mutilated.

Strength and Excitement
Such manipulation has not succeeded in the case of Eva Forest; her book reveals a

strength and expanse of literary and political excitement which is exemplified to her three children. While enquiring about her children's studies she cautions them against the dangers of modern 'specialisation' and holds up to them Shakespeare's integrated view of the world in which he lived. She wants Pablo, 18, to continue studying Russian (another proof of her "communism" for the authorities, no doubt). She stresses the importance of writing, the need constantly to question the surrounding society.

Particularly sensitive is her concern for her young daughter; she chides little Eva for her forced smile during her first prison visit to Yaserias and pleads with her not to hide her immense fears from her mother. The letters, in simple language, answer some of her daughter's most complex questions — "Isn't the family a union of persons who love each other, who exchange ideas and help each other?" Well yes, but most families are disasters, Forest replies, because of the society in which they exist.

She sees her family as somehow different ("as a red star with 5 points"); there is no denying the strength she draws from her children and her husband, playwright Alfonso Sastre. At the beginning of her interrogation she was told that he had been killed. Yet even after she visits him in the Penitentiary Hospital her concern for his health seems greater than that for her own.

Released Prisoners' Elation

One of her best known books was written following her trip to Cuba in 1966, where her son Juan is now studying medicine. An international thread runs through the book; her thoughts are often of others worse off than herself — Chileans, Vietnamese (she compares her mother to a Vietnamese peasant), Palestinians. Her words also voice the elation felt by many Spaniards after the release of hundreds of neighbouring Portuguese from Caetano's prisons. Her several references to the suffering of the English working classes could sound odd to people convinced of the superiority of British democracy.

Eva writes, "I don't know whether it was through tears or steamed window panes that I read the appeal in *Le Monde* — it was one of the first injections of optimism which arrived to us from outside." We here can also hope that the telegram sent to Eva Forest by the 20,000 women and men on the June 21st abortion demonstration in London will reach her at an important time — she now risks a possible death sentence, as do Basque nationalists Antonio Garmendia and Angel Otageui. Lydia Falcon, one of her closest friends, has recently been released; together, they were active in the beginnings of the Spanish women's movement, as yet still fairly unorganised in Spain. There are hopeful signs nonetheless: a housewives' boycott of over 70 supermarkets, the attempted disbanding by the government of the neighbourhood committees in which women are increasingly active. Both women are socialists; Eva laments the gap between the future revolutionary changes in the relations of production and the current sexist ideology which will remain a long time hence.

"Funny, how a simple menstruation can cloud over the world." Her letter describes more than her own individual state. The spectrum of her interests — from psychiatry, politics, and literature to the very minute details of prison life — sketches an inquisitiveness, discipline and ability to see the humour in tragedy. Details of prison life never become boring: her extreme delight in taking a bath after torture (despite the filthy towel), the constant fear of losing the ink from her ball-point pen, or worse, having it taken away by her 'lieutenant', the pasta beads which she and the other women make "with much love".

All these, and more, paint a picture of a woman who under-

stands much about herself and pain, a woman who mothers the younger ones, urging them to "first feel, and then think about it". She counsels them to avoid preoccupation with theoretical problems at the expense of feeling or even crying.

"We are the Free People"

Eva Forest looks at her country in all of its conflicts. She investigates her own opposing emotions and enlightens her own situation with the poem 'From One Prison to Another' where "we are the free people, they the prisoners". And she speaks to much more than a physical jail; for her, solitary confinement is one of the cruellest of tortures. It deprives a human being of an exchange or clash with others, even with books. Who of us has not experienced some variant of that isolation when she explains that "without the dialectic game which the mind needs, one produces a kind of consumption of ideas, as if one were burning oneself."

Surely, Eva Forest did not come to socialism simply by reading Marx nor to feminism by poring over Engels. As a psychotherapist and a writer she has tested her ideas against those of the ruling class, the intellectually barren in Spain. These are people who, while denying the decay of the present system, must also lash viciously out at people who are in the process of changing it. In their attack one recognises more than fear. It approaches jealousy — of the people and class who offer the only positive change for Spain.

Why do Basque priests die from torture? The only possible reaction that the Franco government can have is to fight to the end against Eva Forest's discovery that "imagination is the possible". ("Imaginacion es lo posible".) Her belief that man/woman is a superior being, capable of higher achievements, was echoed by another honorary Spaniard, George Orwell, who ventured that "at present we know only the imagination, like certain wild animals, will not breed in captivity".

Free our sister, free ourselves. □

Anita Bennett

Her book is now published in French and Spanish by Editions des Femmes and soon to be available in Penguin paperback.

Telegrams of protest and for her release should be sent to: F. Ruiz Jarabo, Ministerio de la Justicia, Madrid, Spain. For further information contact the Spanish Solidarity Committee at 837 6954.

Info..Odds & Sods..Advice

Some Useful Addresses and Phone Numbers
Scottish Women's Liberation Centre
4 Fleming Place
St. Andrews
Fife

Manchester Women's Centre
218 Upper Brooke St
Manchester 13
Tel: 061 - 273 2287

Birmingham WL Newsletter Collective
37 Trafalgar Road
Mosley
Birmingham 13

London WL Workshop
38 Earlham St
London WC2
Tel: 01 - 836 6081

Bristol Women's Centre
11 Waverley Road
Bristol 6

Some contact phone nos for Women's Aid Houses:
Acton 01 - 567 4708
Chiswick 01 - 995 4430
Glasgow 041 - 429 5398
Edinburgh 031 - 443 9832
Hull 0482 23218
Manchester 061 - 881 4106

French Women
I read your magazine and am looking for articles etc. on "French Women Today" a subject which interests me, and which I am involved in as part of my university course.
I would be grateful if you could let me know of anything you, or others have written on the subject.
Yours faithfully
Catherine Taylor
200 Springvale Rd
Sheffield 6
Yorks

* The best thing I can suggest you do is to write to the Librairie des Femmes, 68 rue des Saintes Peres, 75007 Paris, BAB 02 08. All the literature from French Women's Liberation that exists can be obtained from this address.

Women Artists
I am an art student at Leeds Poly. I am trying to do my thesis on women artists who have written diaries.
Could you please give me any

information which would help in any way at all. I can't find any information anywhere.
Yours sincerely
Mari Hobbs
Leeds 3

* Three suggestions: Dora Carrington (See article in *Spare Rib* 31), Marie Bashkirtseff (See article in *Spare Rib* 34), and Paula Mohderson Bekker.

Women and Race

At college I am doing an interdisciplinary course on Race Relations. This summer I am doing a dissertation on it and I was thinking of concentrating on the women's aspect - i.e. she has racial and sex discrimination both together.

I was wondering whether you could recommend any books on the topic. As you can imagine local libraries contain hardly any relevant books. Thanks.
Alma Billington

* A booklet (30p) by Selma James called *Sex, Race and Class* has just been published. For more material write to the Librarian, Institute of Race Relations, 277 Pentonville Rd, London N1.

Children's Comics

Can you give me any information concerning sex roles as portrayed in children's comics? Any information you can supply will be most helpful as I am supervising pieces of work by undergraduates in this area and they need some guidance on reading etc.

Looking forward to hearing from you,
Yours sincerely
Barry Smart
University of Sheffield

* See an article called *Crazy Comic Conflict* (*Spare Rib* 5) by Crescy Cannon, and an article by the same writer in the Times Educational Supplement, 14th Jan. 1972, called *Female at Birth*. There is also a book called *Heroines and Love* which is about sexism in women's magazines, and might be useful for your purposes. It's by Michael Cecil and is published by Michael Joseph.

It might help too if I mention some more general sources of information. The following are obtainable from the Children's Rights Workshop, c/o 73 Balfour

St, London SE17. *Sex Role Socialisation in Picture Books for Pre-School Children* and *Sexism in Award Winning Picture Books*. They are both booklets. There is another booklet called *Racist and Sexist Images in Children's Books*, which can be obtained from the Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, 14 Talacre Rd, London NW5;

Other groups working on these topics who you would do well to contact are Cissy (Campaign to Impede Sex Stereotyping in the Young), c/o Helen Petit, 24 Cressida Rd, London N19; the Women's Education Collective Children's Book Group, c/o Ann Heyno, Flat 3, Lady Margaret Rd, London NW5; and Leeds Women's Literature Collective: Children's Books, c/o Ann Geraghty, 22 Stanmore Rd, Leeds 4.

Sexist Comments

The following letter refers to a correspondence between Ann Marx and André Prévin after he had introduced a piece of music on a T.V. programme and described it as "pretty and captivating". He had then said that the same adjectives could be applied to violinist Sylvia Marcovici.

Dear Spare Rib

I'm not giving up and I know there are other people people writing letters, but wouldn't it have more impact if we were organised? Does some media-monitoring group exist to pick up on instances of offensive representation of oppressed groups - particularly women and homosexuals? I am willing to write letters of protest, but lots of instances of sexism or oppression must slip by without response - I would appreciate hearing of some of these in time to register a complaint. I think others would too.
Ann Marx
40 Croftdown Rd
London NW5

* No, we don't know of such a group.

Rape Study

I am doing a study on rape. I shall probably try and relate a number of men and women's attitudes to rape to their attitudes to society in general, and I hope to link this to the type of law and law enforcement which exists to deal with rape in a bourgeois society. I feel this is particularly important at the moment because of the Lord's recent ruling that the man's word should be automatically taken before the woman's in rape cases.

If you have any suggestions about ways of approaching the study or information which you think could be useful, I'd be glad to hear from you.
Yours in sisterhood
Elaine Hctor
88 Westestes Drive
Leicester

* See editorial in *Spare Rib* 37. It is written by the Rape Counselling and Research Centre, 66 York Way, London N1. I suggest you write to them. Also - a book you will find useful. It's called *Against Rape*, by Andrea Medea and Kathleen Thompson, and is published by Peter Owen. It discusses the social background to rape in detail besides being an eminently practical book for all women; full of suggestions on how to handle rape situations. □



Info..Odds & Sods..Advice

The Art of Women's Liberation Propaganda

This year the London Women's Film Group completed a short feature film, 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show'. They wanted to combine entertainment with politics, feminist consciousness with song and dance, equal pay struggles with laughs. The film has been screened quite a few times and excerpts were shown on a television programme.

Response has been varied. People have been divided about the film and it has provoked arguments about the cultural gap between middle class and working class women. The film raises questions about the ways in which the women's movement recognises — or avoids — this gulf, and about the nature of political cinema. *Marsha Rowe* asks why the film is controversial and why reactions to it have been so mixed.



Women's Street Theatre Group performing the equal pay play. From left to right: The housewife 'who produces future workers', the factory convenor, and Mystifying Marvo.

'Are you gonna come to the flics this arvo?', we used to ask each other on Saturday morning. We met while doing the shopping. In the 60s the picture show was turned into a roller skating rink and after that into a music hall theatre. But when we were the young teenagers of the late 50s, there was always a double feature on at the local. Our hearts pounded when the lights went out. We waited for the exotic images to transform us. There was no telly then, and these films transfixed our fantasies and starred our consciousness.

When I was about 11 years old I saw a Cinderella film. Every night for a week before dropping off to sleep, I crouched at the bedroom window in a concentrated haze. I stared at the lights of the city twinkling until I imagined myself into them. Then I would be saved by a hero, swept up a gleaming staircase, and surrounded by beautiful riches.

The second film was the main feature and the first film was the supporting feature, classed second rate not because of a difference in quality but because it was probably an old film and had been on the circuits for donkeys years. Occasionally it

went back as far as the 30s, and then it would be greeted with groans from the audience, and the throwing of sweets. A couple more years and Cinderella was replaced by surf'n sand American blondes or au pairs with an accent, islands of love and the revving of Cadillacs.

In the 30s women were participating in the production of the films we gazed at. By the 60s women were no longer in any position in the industry to express their vision in film. They were not directing, they were not controlling any of the final creative work. Women had been quietly hustled downwards into the hard slog departments. As secretaries, production assistants and continuity girls, women had become the invisible backbone of the film business.

Men were therefore free to project their own masculine fantasies of us, images busily and elusively instilling ideas about women's inferiority into everyone's heads. The unequal balance of the work within the film industry encouraged, stimulated and reinforced this sexism which, during the 50s and the 60s, flickered increasingly into our lives. Images in film and then also in tele-

vision, pierced our retinas and pinned quarrelsome feminine qualities onto our self-perception.

As this pessimistic attitude about women probed deeper and deeper into our self-image, it began to hurt too much, it met resistance, it began to crack up.

It strained itself too hard against the facts. In 1965, 52% of married women with children of school age were working. As the 60s drew to a close nearly half of the total female population of the UK over 15 were in paid employment. Women workers had begun to protest about low pay. A strike by women workers had temporarily closed down Fords in 1968. Women were beginning to move from the defensive to the offensive.

The media thought this was very rude. When the women's movement began, and when women's liberation interrupted the Miss World Television Spectacular in 1970, letting out howls and yells of years of pent-up rage, the media flung out insults hard and fast.

Patterns of Discrimination

But women's liberation also connected up

a group of women working within the film and television industry. These women were bang in the middle of the arena and so it was very difficult. And two sides peculiar to film work had to be clutched and struggled with, two elements which compounded their task and made it hard to know how to act.

The first is a remnant of the 30s. Before the opportunities for women to work in the skilled grades of the film industry were gradually eliminated in the late 40s, the Association of Cinematographic and Television Technicians (ACTT), had won equal pay for their women members. Accusations of discrimination against women were harder to prove in this union, since equal pay had been operating for 40 years and since trade unions have traditionally organised around wages. This equal pay scale concealed and made more mysterious the factors preventing women gaining the experience necessary for promotion or blocking women's entrance into certain jobs. Jill Nicholls, reporting on the recent ACTT report into discrimination against women in *Spare Rib* No.35, wrote: 'One Personnel Manager said that women could not become graders because graders had to have worked in printing and printers had to have worked in drying and there were no women driers in the lab.'

Still further, equal pay in any prestige profession like this, once granted, might mean that a few women in high grades could afford private solutions to any domestic organisation problems, such as the cost of a day nursery or paying for a cleaner at home. But the inheritance of equal pay did not reveal what was inherent in the structure of the work, the conditions which hindered other women. Women's labour in the home, women's role in the reproduction of labour power and childcare are women's common battle front, and yet although trade unionism has won protective legislation for women on the basis of their female role (for example the Factory Acts), the film industry is notorious for the long and erratic hours demanded of camera operators and editors and all those involved in the actual film making. These conditions confine and cut off the jobs involved from domestic personal relations and responsibilities, and a solution cannot be found for women (or men) in money terms alone.

The other obstacle for the women is the machinery, the equipment of film making. It is heavy and it requires trained operators. It is not easy for women whose education, when encouraged at all, is encouraged in the arts not the sciences, to feel competent faced with the knobs and screws, adjusting lights and lenses, the wires and tangle of electronics. The women's film group within the ACTT organised a Women's Film Workshop last year to demystify the mechanics, because, 'it is so difficult for women working within the industry to gain any practical experience or concrete information about the equipment around them.' Reva Landau wrote that women are both taunted for not knowing technicalities, and scorned when they ask, 'any attempts to gain such knowledge are found amusing'.¹

The awkwardness of the heavy equipment is being acknowledged by men. A lightweight camera had been bought for the National Film School especially for women students.

The male students discovered how convenient it was and 'made such a fuss that three more lightweight cameras were bought and the men rushed to take them out as much as the women'.²

Collective Overcoming of Sexism

When the London Women's Film Group began to combine the skills of the few women in it who work in the film industry, with collective work to teach the other women how to make films, they were taking on a double task. They were struggling against their own feelings, the internalisation of their low status at work, what it feels like to spend years making the tea in the cutting room and typing other people's scripts. And at work itself, they were also confronting the contempt of the men, the unequal balance of the work and trying to prise open the lid of the equal pay regulation which covered the discrimination against them. Then, they were launching off as a collective into an activity with many aims. They wanted to share their skills and produce the film together. They were not able to work full time on the film, so all the processes were scattered into weekends and free evenings when the group could meet. And they wanted to produce a film which would be useful for the women's movement and in the general struggle by women for equal pay.

The project was to produce a film which would be based on a play, 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show', already written by the London Women's Theatre Group. From the beginning, transferring the play to scenes, working out the angles and lighting for shots, filming, recording sound, and editing, the film took two years to make.

The Film Group received £1,000 from the British Film Institute and spent half on film cutting equipment and half on a projector. The rest of the equipment had to be borrowed, which is quite difficult because it is so expensive, and then there is the worry of how much it would cost to replace if anything went wrong. Especially when many of the women would be strangers to the equipment and handling it for the first time. The women taught each other the different techniques, light meter readings, lighting, recording, camera work, film editing. What one woman learned one day, she taught someone else the next day, and so they all gradually acquired knowledge and understanding of the work involved. 'It was the opposite to work, the assistant was often more skilled than the camera operator', said one of them who works in the industry. 'We can do it', said another, 'after all that clambering past cables in the studios without as much as a look down any camera lens.' So the elation of learning was shared and became as strengthening to the women who had some film skills as to the women without any.

There was no money for endless re-shooting if a scene did not turn out as well as planned. They had to put most of their concentration into the care and complications of teaching each other, into meetings to review batches of film as it progressed, and into the general problems of organisation. One actress, whose figure mattered because she plays a sex object in the film, became pregnant and her tummy bulged bigger and bigger and had to be disguised somehow. Another vital woman

in the film was squatting. She was forced to move and disappeared from contact half way through the production. The scenes they had already taken had to make do.

The film was finished in early 1975 and many of us on the *Spare Rib* collective went to watch the press show. We were disappointed with the film. However, it is important to understand how hard the women were working within the film industry to alert other film workers and the ACTT trade unionists to the discrimination against them. Half the Group then belonged to the union and this proportion has since gone up. Much of their energy went into these achievements, and, given their limited resources and time, two years is short for the project they took on.

In the midst of an industry which is hypocritical about its own political and cultural role, which abounds with anti-working class and racist attitudes, it is very difficult to fight its deep and confounding sexism. As well as organising events like the Women's Film Workshop, after picketing the ACTT headquarters, after the first feminist speeches startled the ACTT Annual General Meeting and the first motions about discrimination against women were passed by the conference in 1973, the union agreed to appoint Sarah Benton to investigate the position of women. Earlier this year, the resulting report, *Patterns of Discrimination against Women in the Film and Television Industries*, became the most extensive report about women at work ever carried out and published by a trade union.

Therefore we look at the film, 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show', in the context of all these other activities similarly being undertaken, as well as the stresses and strains of learning to work collectively. Because *Spare Rib* is a monthly magazine, it gives us the regular chance to be self-critical, whereas the London Women's Film Group have had to wait two years until their final work could be seen by other women and its effect assessed. My criticism is intended constructively just as we on *Spare Rib* continually expect and need it, and as it raises similar questions that we ourselves face.

Editorial Control

In making 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show', the London Women's Film Group were rebelling against a particular power relation, that of the people who make the film over the subject of the film, the people being filmed.

A member of the Film Group working in television described a male editor chortling, 'Oh great, keep in that bit where she's crying', whilst editing an interview with a woman about her abortion. At the same time, the editor cuts out anything which displeases him. His personal and political views will interpret the information for us, the viewers. He can throw the politics of women's right to choose into the dustbin, and present for the audience's pity the sentiment still left. Pity is bottomless, wallowing and patronising, and it is the politics of women's liberation to confront the attitude of methods like this which perpetuate our oppression, and keep us bogged down in an emotional quagmire.

Previously, smaller groups of women belonging to the Film Group have made

documentary films attempting to reveal women's experiences without dishonesty. However, one of the film makers, for instance, felt that this documentary style still could not avoid, 'exploiting people — using people's imagination for our own ends'. How was the Group going to solve this problem? One way out of this dilemma was to turn to a different form of film.

The Film Group decided to experiment with fiction. 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show' is neither drama nor documentary, but is described by the Group as a mixture of 'didacticism, parody and entertainment'. It does not differ in any significant aspect from the play on which it is based.

The Women's Theatre Group wrote the original play collectively over a period of two months, specifically for a trade union conference, held by the Technical and Supervisory Section of the engineering union to discuss equal pay. The Women's Theatre Group performed the play, described by one of them as a 'political fantasy', a number of times after the TASS Conference.

It seemed useful to present the play as a film because performances by the Theatre Group were not easy to organise as the women did not work full time in the Group which had no money. A film could travel around the country to be seen by more people. The advantages of a film would seem to outweigh the disadvantages of the play, although a film could not be altered or adapted to either the interests of the particular group being visited, or according to audience criticism.

Already the play had outraged some men. One left-wing trade union official was very cross, saying that the play's criticism of men would have the effect of splitting and dividing the union members instead of uniting them in their common interest. However, the membership of the Women's Theatre Group changed and as it did so, performances of the play ceased. It was not possible to continue the dialogue between the play and the women it was for and about. It is therefore the play as it was written in 1972 that we see transferred into the film, 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show'.

Pillorying Barbara Castle

In 1975 the film lacks an understanding of how involved and various women's strikes over equal pay have been. It does not indicate any knowledge of how diverse the reactions of fellow men workers or trade unionists have been. Its politics appear superficial, and the film as a whole a combination of wishful thinking and radical feminism, rather than the socialist feminism which was intended.

The film is not a long one. It lasts only 50 minutes. The first time I saw it I fell asleep during a debate between two members of parliament. These characters are played by women, as are all the characters in the film, and the dialogue is taken straight from *Hansard*, the verbatim parliamentary records. I felt guilty and blamed myself for dropping off at this point. The second time I saw the film, again a practically irresistible urge came upon me to close my eyes, although I was not tired that day. The parody of the MPs is expert, yet its effect

is drowsy and numbing. Instead of clarifying the parliamentary debate over equal pay, instead of presenting us with an understanding of the issues underlying the debate, we are given the conversation just as it was: boring, trivial, irritating. The imitation is life-like enough for it to send me, anyway, to sleep so that the two men would disappear from my thoughts and the problem would go away.

Wanting to escape from the situation altogether is not the reaction the Film Group intended. They spent six months preparing the film script (although not all of them were involved in these preparatory discussions) and they thought carefully about their portrayal of another member of parliament, Barbara Castle. At the end of the 60s, when Barbara Castle was Minister of Employment, she drew up the Equal Pay Bill.

Barbara Castle belongs to the Tribune group of Labour MPs and is considered left-wing. But the Group recognised that she was also instrumental in the publication of the document *In Place of Strife*, which was designed to curb the power of trade unions. They exaggerated her position and created a film role for her as the Bride of Frankenstein, a man-made woman, under the influence of her inventors. She appears like a wicked witch who cooks up a poisonous brew of tea to pacify the workers and who feeds the women workers the smallest slice of the national cake, persuading them that to accept it is in the national interest.

'The Amazing Equal Pay Show' film returns us to the story of the Ford women's strike in 1968. It takes us to a scene outside high-rise council flats where we see a

Kate Millett

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grotesque circus run by a crazy guy called Mystifying Marvo, and his performers, Her Majesty's Forces of Oppression, and then onto an unfolding of how this Capitalist Circus, as it is called, operates. This includes many aspects, for instance the 'media man' who manipulates the feelings of the housewife in the street, and a vulgar 'Vulva' car advertisement which manipulates our feelings of love, turning them into romantic commercial attachments. We are shown men picketing, we are shown the women's equal pay dispute and how the women are let down and sold out. We are also shown, featured through the film, the life of a working mother, oppressed and isolated. These many events are interlaced with song and dance routines and accompanied by natty turns of phrase, like 'Ferocious felines... the Ford females'. The film is in colour.

Criticism of the film must also apply to the play from which it was scripted. The Theatre Group based the play's version of Barbara Castle's visit to the women on strike in the factory, on her actual visit to the women machinists who brought Fords to a halt. The play was composed with the memory of the publicity surrounding her visit, and of the atmosphere provoked by it when the effect of her intervention was to defuse the strike. This lingered, marring the arrival of an anyway insufficient Equal Pay Bill. Therefore, it is understandable that Barbara Castle became a focus for the play.

But this anger in itself is insufficient. It misses its actual target. The film did not explain for me in any clear way the relation between government and employer, nor why it was in their interests to support a Bill which was likely to confuse women workers and was full of loopholes. Because I could not grasp this connection in the film, (I had to have the cake symbol explained to me again later), the blame thrown at Barbara Castle went boomerang back onto me. I could only catch the intention to blame her and this confused me.

The Fords Strike, 1968

If we return to the actual strike at Fords, we find a more complicated set of circumstances than we see in 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show'. Rose Boland was the leader of the women's strike. In an interview at the time, she said she did not expect the women to go all out for 100% equal pay straight away. They were, first of all, concerned to prove that they were skilled workers, equal to the skilled men classified as C Grade. The women wanted Grade C recognition, not only on the basis of the work they performed, but also on the basis of the tests they had to pass on three separate machines before they were hired. The Ford management denied the women's work was equal to the men's.

Then Barbara Castle arrived to perform negotiations and to keep the peace. She decided there should be a Court of Inquiry to investigate whether or not the women could be accepted into C Grade. Advertised as an independent body, the Court of Inquiry is not, however, innocent of a particular role. The government's motives are displaced off their direct representative into this disguise of impartiality. The women had no option but to accept the holding of the Court and await its verdict. Meanwhile, they still held out for 92%

towards equal pay. Fords only wanted to pay them 90%. Barbara Castle cautioned Fords to pay the women 92%. After all, she had got the women to agree to talks so Fords had better accept their side of the bargain. Fords paid the women 92% and the women reluctantly returned to work.

It is necessary to point out, as the film does, that women do not equal one class in society, despite the fact that sexism does operate at all class levels. But in 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show' the class interests separating the one woman, Barbara Castle, off from the interests of the women factory workers, are concealed and diverted from us by a touch of glamour. Caricaturing Barbara Castle as a wicked witch, and attacking her personally because she is a woman who sells out other women, means we forget about the forces pushing her into the role she plays in the fuss surrounding her personality.

Why was the women's claim to Grade C so significant it had to be investigated by a special Court? In Rose Boland's words: 'Let's face it, if the women had got C Grade, which we are still fighting for, it would have broken Ford's wage structure. There are so many men fighting for upgrading that if Ford's gave it to us, they would have to give it right through the firm.'³

It was a complex situation. The agreement between the Ford management and Barbara Castle was aimed at preventing the women workers from realising their own power. It attempted to trample out the strike at all costs in case it lit further bonfires amongst other women workers. The women's demands, if successful, would have sparked off new demands by the men, and both Ford and government were especially worried about such a conflagration.

But, far from illustrating this, 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show' conveys an impression that women's interests and men's interests lie in opposite directions. In the effort to tell us that women may well be let down by men on all sides, at work, in the union and at home, the balance of the film becomes one which stresses upon women the heavy load they will have to carry in these confrontations with men. We see a chauvinist convenor selling the women out, and only realising why he was wrong at the very end of the film. We see the women workers holding their first strike meeting and telling men, 'This is a women's meeting. You have no right to be here.' The characters' explanations for their actions, for instance the sudden raising of the women's consciousness at their strike meeting, are verbal and not linked in a visual way to their past or their future. Because the actual reasons for going on strike are not presented dramatically, the film is weighed down on the side of the men's negative response to women organising together. The relation in the film between this and women's positive efforts to organise autonomously looks like a see-saw, with the actual difficulties of the women's experience in the strike and their own organisation appearing so light they are up in the air and ready to float off.

For the Ford women, making the connection with women workers at other Ford's factories was essential, and more difficult than coping with men at home. Rose Boland said: 'On the whole, during the three

weeks we were on strike, all the girls worked hard and they all stuck together. In fact, I don't think I saw my husband or son during the whole three weeks. They never knew whether I was in or out.' So she did not have to tell them to go away and leave her on her own. More troubling was: 'You have to have the support of the girls at Halewood as well, which we did have for C Grade. But mention equal pay to the women up there and they don't want to know. They've got a different way of life up there really. Up there the man is boss. Not so much now with the younger generation, but more with people my age.'

Radical Feminism

Both the play, and the film made of the play, suffer from the imposition of the experience of one group of women, the play makers and the film makers, onto the experience of the women workers in the factory. One of the women who was in the theatre group at the time and helped write the original play agreed that, 'Our mood was probably more against working with men.' However, their mistake is not only one of generalising too much from their own particular experience, it is a result of blending two sides of women's oppression, that at home and that at work, into a hotch potch, rather than attempting to show how the two different experiences affect, inform and change each other.

Equal pay struggles can unite women employed in wage labour. They need the support of men workers and a new realisation of their specific difficulties as a sex by trade unions.

When women emerge from their individual loyalty to men and isolation from each other, whether provoked by a women's liberation group perhaps outside of work, or whether by organising together at work, they do have to overcome male resistance. This resistance is often angry, accompanied by abuse or accusations of neglect. This reaction cannot happen in exactly the same way at work and at home.

When a man is a chauvinist at work, for example the convenor in the factory, his relation is not the same as that of a father or husband to the women at work. The women are not financially dependent on his wages within the home. They work alongside him, and receive their own wages independently. In this case, they are in the same union as he is, and he 'convenes' their union meetings. The quantity and quality of his exploitation as a worker differs, but not the fact that he has the same employer, the same class enemy, in the same place. It is on this connection that women can stand to confront his chauvinism and use their group strength to educate and change him. Propaganda designed to assist women's equal pay struggles needs to help men discover this, and to inspire confidence and courage in women at work. Neglecting women's domestic labour would, of course, be wrong, but the political mistake of 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show' is to transfer the battle at home onto the battle at work as if they were the same territory requiring the same tactics, when the ground is laid out differently.

We can't dissolve the problem of how to win male support for women's struggles by simply telling men to go away, although ►

women can and do depart from men in their personal life and do need to organise amongst themselves to discover their own strength within the union.

Brecht and Political Cinema

In addition to their desire to make the film to help women workers involved in equal pay disputes, the Film Group put much thought into the form and structure of their product, 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show'. They write that, 'We have come to realise the importance of injecting notions of entertainment into political cinema,' and they support this with a quote from a male play maker, Brecht: 'The theatre that can't be laughed in is a theatre to be laughed at.'

I don't think the film does make people laugh. The Film Group acknowledge the difficulty of transferring what is lively, slap dash and hilarious in street theatre onto film. Yet it is not only a question of medium, of change from a live performance to a film, it is also a question of content. We cannot ignore style when thinking about content, because it is the style which determines what sort of effect the content will produce.

If we take the metaphor chosen by the Film Group of injecting entertainment into political theatre, we realise the result of this is meant to be a transformation of the body, and not a decoration. The perhaps sick, but anyway inadequate, political theatre is cured or made more alive and kicking by the addition of the entertainment. It does not necessarily mean a cartoon or a few jokes tacked on. It will be amusing if it is absorbing. It will be engrossing if it also includes some indication of the grossness of life. The Film Group also refer to the 'didactic'. When Brecht used the expression 'didactic play' he aimed, 'not at abolishing the "drama" but at producing a new encounter with the audience, a more binding encounter than that of the traditional theatre'.⁴

Brecht despised bourgeois theatre. He despised it because it invited the audience to be sucked into and swallowed up by the drama. It does not allow the people making up the audience to surface back into their own individuality, to become aware of their own particular, personal relation to the events being presented to them. Instead, they can only surface after they leave the theatre back into the same unchanged air they breathed before. Brecht introduced the notion of 'alienation' into theatre so that the drama became a political statement to which the audience must react. By forcing the audience to realise they were separate from the events on the stage, he could make them aware of their own role, their own responsibility, and bring about an alteration in their consciousness.

Although there are many people presenting the drama and many people making up the audience, we could consider it as a conversation between two people. These two people, the actors and actresses on the one side and the audience on the other side, have respect for each other. In their conversation, or exchange, they are conscious of what they are doing and what they are saying, giving each other time to think and reflect, without forgetting they are human beings, who laugh, rage, eat, drink, and so on. So for Brecht, 'to entertain' was to present something

recognisable to the audience as being like themselves. Upon this reality, in whatever form, rests the depth of the audience's involvement and reactions. It is this which creates the 'binding encounter'.

We return to 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show' and to the Brecht quote chosen by the Film Group about laughing in the theatre. The release of laughter can be the release of new consciousness. Laughter can be the explosion of sudden recognition. This will depend on the accuracy of the realism presented to us, and on the quality of the presentation. The quality of the entertainment will depend on the truth of the facts underlying the presentation, and so the instruction will be an integral part of the entertainment. The material will present connections of meaning which have previously been concealed from our understanding. These surprises need to be carefully spaced in the material or they won't have time to sink in, or our attention will fail and we will not be able to keep up.

The method decided upon by the Film Group to create a recognition of male chauvinism and of sexism was to have all the parts in the film played by women, including the male roles. This also fitted in

with working collectively on the film as women and teaching each other. But this method in the final product, the film as we the audience see it, fails. It creates astonishment but it delays recognition rather than hastening it. One woman trade unionist who saw the film decided not to hire it for her trade union conference. She commented that women would prefer to see, 'actual men behaving like male chauvinist pigs so they could relate to it, so they could say "Yes, that's just how my husband behaves".'

However, it's not quite that simple, just to criticise the method used by the Film Group. It may have been more successful if the acting had been less uneven. As it is, in 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show', the most accurate depiction of male behaviour is in the acting of the convenor. This confuses the parody of some of the other men's parts which are not acted in such a skilled, mimic way. The effect, for instance, of the men picketing outside the factory, is of women acting men's parts badly, rather than women satirising men's behaviour.

The acting is also good when the women imitate the members of parliament which I referred to earlier. But here the fault lies

in its naturalism. Naturalism is not the same thing as realism. Naturalism involves no questioning, it is static, unmoving, given. Realism is delving deep into what this naturalism represents, choosing those aspects of the most relevance, and then recreating that meaning for us. The play makers' success in bringing out this connection for the audience, will depend both on what is chosen and then on the mannerisms used to support this choice, so that the acting illuminates the meaning and the meaning is informed by the acting.

Misplaced Audience Identity

Perhaps the Film Group made their task too difficult and the film too complicated by introducing Ina. They describe her role as 'an observer, a representative of the audience within the film'. We see Ina at home with the children and housework. Near the end of the film she joins into a women's liberation march through London. Except for Ina, the working mother, everyone in the film is meant to be a caricature. For instance, Mystifying Marvo who is the 'ringmaster of the Capitalist Circus' and who dons many different hats as we follow him dancing along through the various

scenes of the film, representing anything from the Stock Exchange to the forces which 'mystify the workers'. Also Poodle, the woman as sex object, who is shown always slipping daintily into place beside him.

Ina stands watching Mystifying Marvo perform in a circus box on the sunny concrete pavement outside her block of flats as the film begins. A mixture of other people are also watching. The woman trade unionist pointed out this scene for comment, 'They are obviously ordinary people who were just walking past when they were making the film, they are not really generating interest.' So for her, and also for me, there is confusion at the very start of the film about which characters we are supposed to identify as ordinary people, and which we are supposed to identify as the odd, fantastic ones. As the film develops, as Mystifying Marvo and Poodle take us along to the women acting the men on strike, we know the strikers are not men, they're women playing men. But later, when the women workers appear, are they meant to be women workers in a factory, or women playing at women workers in a factory? We are not sure. We

have already been confused by the imprecise scene at the beginning of the film.

Unfunny Caricatures of Friends and Foes Alike

Until I read the Film Group's statement after seeing their film, I did not understand that they meant the characters to be caricatures. For the caricatures to be successful, there has to be careful analysis of the subject, so that the essential elements are extracted for ridicule and elaboration. If it is not only one character in one situation being caricatured, but many characters and many situations, the necessary work becomes tricky and complicated, demanding and time consuming. Not only does the final effect of each caricature have to be considered carefully and in detail, but within the film the relation between the various caricatures has to be worked out so that the differences are clear, and so they counteract against each other sharply and with vitality. Then all these reflections bouncing off each other have to be considered as a total piece of work. How will the film appear from beginning and end to the audience?

Mystifying Marvo was obviously a caricature and, as the representative of capitalism in 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show', he is a key character for our instruction. But I could not understand the lesson and, because his shape was blurred, so his relation to most of the other caricatures remained blurred. Furthermore, because he keeps his political and economic connections safely locked up, all that I was left to feel was that he must be a pretty nifty operator. He was never in one place long enough to be attacked and he seemed too clever to be outwitted. My feeling of helplessness confronted by Marvo remained despite the fact that the film denounces him at the end, when Poodle rebels, 'You can powder your own nose.' Marvo is overthrown in the private sphere, but this personal revolution does not encompass the whole of the political world.

The Film Group expected the women's liberation slogan, that the political is the personal, to do too much work for them and so their presentation of the events in the film became one-sided. Looking at the caricatures of the men, the combination of the uneven acting and the intention to make male chauvinism appear ridiculous by imitation, has the effect of being both an indirect and therefore a less useful approach, and appearing sarcastic, without understanding, and therefore bitter. We need to take the opposite slogan into account also, to examine the reasons why sexism operates within men, and so also reveal how the personal is the political.

It is very difficult to carry our intentions into practice. However intense the effort we put into our work, however theoretically correct we may be, our work remains incomplete until it is realised in other people's reactions. Only after this, and after we ourselves have seen and absorbed the various responses to our work, can we judge it from an internal and an external point of view.

A member of the Film Group showed the film to a women's liberation group — both working class and middle class women, planning a women's centre — who liked the

film. So, in this case, the Film Group can feel they have been successful, partially, in making a film for the women's movement.

Middle Class Bias

The other aim for the film was for it to be useful to women involved in equal pay struggles, and here the Group's experience in the film industry itself is in a special category, and dissimilar to other women workers, either manual or non-manual workers, women in industry or women in servicing jobs. The Film Group would need to have been in close communication with the lives, attitudes and responses of many other women workers in order to carry out their intention to make a film in which the audience would recognise their own experience of oppression and also their feelings towards their oppressors. Lacking this experience, the film is not successful for this purpose. Why? Because only if this connection of recognition fits, will the audience go on to make their own connections between the parts presented to them. If drawing out these connections, restructuring the parts within themselves, makes their experience of themselves work in new ways, if the connections they make shift their thinking, then they will also ask themselves what they must make of the whole of it. The political provocation of the film depends on this.

Between Ina, the caricatures of the women workers, and Poodle, I got lost again. My impression was that the film separated domestic labour off from the women workers by incorporating it fully only in the role of Ina, just as also the film

isolated the experience of sexism totally into the body of Poodle, and therefore carried it away from women's daily lives, from women in the film and from women in the audience. Left over, in between, are the women workers who are only superficially sketched in for us. These caricatures seem to have begun from something not quite accurate because of an early lack of communication, and grown into something quite off the mark. They appeared to me as outlines exaggerating a mistaken identity and so my response was regret and anger. (Does anyone ever say, 'Let's get on with the strike?') The women acting the women workers present a muddle of working class and middle class behaviour and forms of speech, in actions, words and accents. Neither one nor the other, this confusion appeared like an ignorant and insulting gesture, instead of expressing solidarity between women.

Earlier this year, the Women's Trade Union Conference brought out many of the problems raised by 'The Amazing Equal Pay Show'. It showed how much closer now are the demands of the trade union movement to the demands of the women's movement when the film was begun in January 1973. Therefore the film could have even more potential to be useful to women workers and trade unionists. But it's been dismissed by some already. The same woman trade unionist also said she felt the film was too simple, that convenors were 'both better and worse' than the one in the film, that the trade union movement as a whole was a lot worse than the film showed. 'It's not just a joke. I would have preferred

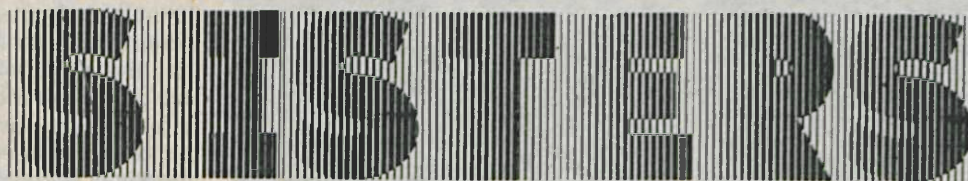
it if they filmed people coping with a strike. It was as if it was not all very important. It's not much use to our members, though I know one member who liked it. We need more ammunition than that.'

"Art which adds nothing to the experience of the public, which leaves it as it found it, which wants to do no more than flatter rude instincts and confirm un-ripe or over-ripe opinions — such art is worth nothing. So-called pure entertainment just produces a hangover. There is just as little value in art which has no purpose but to educate, and thinks to do this by flagellation, abandoning all the varied methods available to the arts: this will not educate the public, but simply bore it. The public have a right to be entertained. This helps to reproduce working strength, but it must not only do this. And the artists have a right to be allowed to entertain." Brecht.⁵ ■

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'The Amazing Equal Pay Show' can be hired for screening and discussion from The Other Cinema, 12-13 Little Newport Street, London W1. Telephone 01-734 8508. Hiring fee: £10.50.



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WAVE 'EM & LEAVE 'EM

Liz Waugh and Terri Goddard look at the sexist-oriented lyrics of some of their favourite and not-so-favourite songs.

Like any other area of culture, rock music displays many of the sexist attitudes prevalent in our society. Its influence is immense — as powerful as advertising or television in forming people's self-image, and despite rock's development from the early sha-las to music of adventurous complexity and imagination, the sexist attitudes expressed in the lyrics have remained basically unchanged. No matter how daring and advanced his amazing guitar riff is, you can bet your life that yer average musician will still come out with the same old stereotyped crap. Yes, here he goes — we're cute little girls, sexy sirens, cheats, witches or goddesses or angels, toys or parcels or just any old thing that can be pushed around, or nice comforting little wives safely tucked away inside the home. Do we listen closely to the words? Probably not — except for feminists on the lookout for nasty sexism! But the accumulative effect of lyric upon puerile lyric produces our image of woman, an image as pervasive and insidious as the smiling housewife in the ad., or the plastic-perfect teenager in "Jackie".

And so the cult of femininity persuades us that women are romantic, weak, emotional, possessive, our lives revolving around 'love', and most important of all, 'Every woman should be/What her man wants her to be' (Marvin Gaye). If you are into rock lyrics, however, and a woman aware of all the implications of having been born female, then no matter how much you dig the music, the words will often shock you out of your enjoyment. Take 'Under My Thumb', for instance. Only a woman who really wanted to be subjugated and dominated could make it her very own, adopted, personal theme song. It's essentially a man's song. For us, the whole situation is rather ambiguous — to really enjoy the Stones or Free or Hendrix at their raunchiest, it's necessary to perform a sort of mental dislocation — and perhaps some of the women reading this know what we mean. Jagger may be one of the most sexist lyricists around, but he's also one of the most brilliant. We don't intend to miss out on *that* combined with the best rock'n'roll



band in the world! We can cope with the attitudes, but it means that we're tacitly accepting the status quo. Oh, what a dilemma! as Robert would say.

Much of the time, women just act as mirrors for the narcissism inherent in the kind of exaggerated big-shot, cock-rock epitomised by singers like Jagger, Hendrix, Paul Rogers, James Brown, Barry White and not forgetting Gary Glitter, all of them strutting and preening in the time-honoured fashion. Sorry, but on the whole we're not impressed! Men's assertion of their masculinity, and hence their supposed superiority, ranges from an amused paternalism (The girl can't help it/She's in love with me) to a few cases of overt misogyny. The underlying theme is nearly always that of possession. It both reflects and reinforces the prevalent ethos of our society, in which monogamy is the rule. With the emphasis on the exclusive relationship, on finding one person and clinging on for life, it's not surprising that lyrics like 'She wears my ring' and 'This little girl of mine' abound. One common theme depicts women as ensnaring and caging men. This does correspond to reality — a reality brought about by women's conditioning. Hendrix's bitter boast must have found an echo in many a male heart: 'A woman here/A woman there/Tried to keep me in a plastic cage/But they don't realise/It's so easy to break'.

But woe betide the woman who won't be tied down — witness Dion's outraged warnings to 'Stay away from Runaround Sue' 'cos 'Sue goes out with other guys' (gasp! shock! horror!). Would you believe that this same maltreated male sets himself up as some kind of god — the Wanderer — 'I love 'em and I leave 'em/They don't even know my name'. A very acute attack of the double standard, that. Men like laying down the law: 'You've got to change your evil ways/Before I start loving you' (Santana), 'Lucille/You don't do your Daddy's will' (Little Richard), 'Sundown, you better take care/If I find you've been creeping/Round my back stair' (Gordon Lightfoot), 'You'd better watch your step, girl/Or start living with your mother' (Stones), and 'You'd better watch out baby/Here comes your master' (Hendrix). Needless to say, once Dolly's been mastered what does she hear? 'You can't hold me down baby/I gotta be stone free/To do as I please/Stone free/To ride the breeze'. All these Hard Drivin' Ramblin' Men. Even Buddy Holly could be crudely callous, as in 'That'll be the day' — 'Cupid shot his dart/He shot it at your heart/So if we ever part/Then I'll leave you', and young Davy Jones forsook the Monkees' cosy image to sing 'You're not the only cuddly toy/That was ever enjoyed/By any boy'. Then don't forget about the other guy: 'Hey man, leave my wife alone' (John Lee Hooker), 'Finder's Keepers' (Chairmen of the Board),



'You can't touch her/'Cos she's mine all mine' (Mud), and what about poor old Livin' Doll — 'Gonna lock her up in a trunk/So no big hunk/Can steal her away from me'. I hope he remembered to put some airholes in.

In 'Killer Queen', Mr Mercury comments that 'she' — the female partner, however you want to take it — is 'insatiable in appetite/What a drag'. This is highly indicative of male attitudes towards female sexuality — sometimes scorn, sometimes fear rising to a crescendo of paranoia and violent reaction. The usual solution is to deny women any self-volition, to reify them till no more than dolls, mere objects. Rebellion against such an insecure man will bring down the just wrath and vengeance of the thwarted machismo. Dolly Dagger gets her come-uppance, and Prince Buster in Big Five tells us how the woman who's been refusing him for some time has now decided *she* wants *him*; he gloats that he's 'gonna juke her with vengeance tonight' and 'plant the seed in her womb all right'. Pregnancy always was a major weapon in sexual politics — this guy turns sex into total warfare! Unfortunately mythology has



given men the idea that women are really some kind of monster. We can laugh at it, but Tempest manage to draw alarming parallels: 'Whence comes a vision of the woman/Cursed beyond all mortal evil/Whose countenance alone converted/Fearless men to blocks of stone./When you think you're free/She's just stringing you along/There's never any end to a tale like this/There's always another with death on her lips/The mythical Jason was saved by his shield/He was just a legend/But you and her are real/Bad deal'. One of Rory Gallagher's standards takes misogyny to its logical conclusion: 'You didn't say you didn't love me/When you were stretched out on my bed/Drinking moonshine whisky/And talking all out of your head./I feel like snapping/My pistol in your face/Gonna make the graveyard/Be your resting place'. Hmm.

Prime contenders so far for our 1975 Pig of the Year Award are Moments and Whatnauts, who appear to have no concept of women's sexuality whatsoever. But then they *are* singing about 'Girls': 'I'd like to

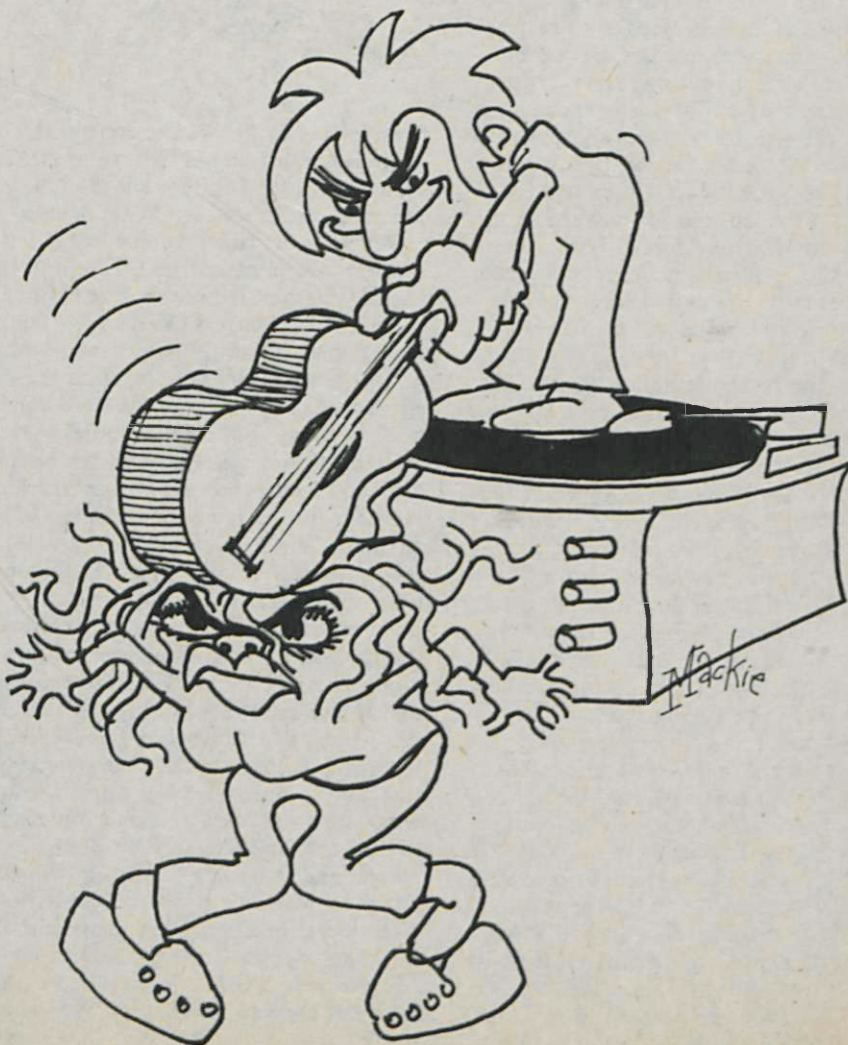
be on an island/With five or six of them fine ones/And them that ain't the best lookin'/Are the ones that do the best cooking'. So conceited — they don't seem to realise that they wouldn't last long with half-a-dozen *real* women! There's a widespread belief that man is the Hunter (guess who) and woman his legitimate prey. The theme is reiterated in Cream's 'Politician', the Zombies' 'Time of the Season' and Spencer Davis' 'Gimme Some Lovin' and 'Keep on Runnin', to mention but a few. Keeping on running gets to be a drag, but a lone woman is always assumed to be in need of company (unless she's eighty or ugly!). Get this: 'There she stood/In the street/Smiling from her head to her feet/I said Hey, what is this/Maybe she's in need of a kiss...'. *Moral*: if you don't want strange men rushing up and kissing you in the street, look miserable. Oh but then some bloody idiot will say 'Cheer up darling!...'

Still, it's a man's world and of course they know best. They let us know it, too. Big Daddy James Brown patronises 'Don't you worry 'bout/The motion of the ocean/But just be there/When I take a notion'. The Sexettes are told 'You can't think about/All the *bad* things in the world today/You just gotta keep on *dancin*'. Even Stevie wonders 'Mary wants to be a Superwoman/But is it really in her head?' while, quote, 'housewives' are subjected to this drivel from Jack Jones: 'Hey, little girl/Brush your hair, fix your make-up/Soon he will be at the door' — 'And men will always be men./Don't think because there's a ring on your finger/You needn't try any more/For



wives should always be lovers too/Run to his arms the moment he comes home to you...'. Still on the domestic front, Clifford T. Ward made a nauseating attempt to glamourise what is essentially shitwork when he wrote: 'You're my picture/By Picasso/Lighting up my scullery' and 'You still have ingredients that make you shine/And when you take your apron off/I know you're mine'. By the way, anybody fancy having Paul Anka's baby?

Nevertheless, it seems we revel in it. 'I want to be Bobby's Girl' (Susan Maughan), 'Take another little piece of my heart' (Janis, being defiantly masochistic), 'I'm like a puppet on a string' (Good for you, Sand). Women's possessiveness tends to be clinging and dependent, as opposed to the 'My woman does what she's told' male



attitude. Occasionally there are fierce retaliations: 'Keep your hands off my baby/Girl, get it through your head/That boy's mine' (Little Eva to her erstwhile best friend), 'I'm gonna tear your playhouse down' (Ann Peebles) or 'You better fix it, Mr Fix-it Man/'Cos if you don't fix it baby/Maybe the milkman can!' (The Sisters Love, delivering a loaded ultimatum). On Shirley Brown's 'Woman to Woman' we hear a rare example of a woman treating a man as a mere possession. *She's* the one with all the money, *she* buys everything for him, she reckons she loves him, so he's *hers*. Barbara doesn't stand a chance. This is pretty nasty as well as unusual, being just a regurgitation of male chauvinism. But even more unpleasant and apparently alone in its field is a thing called 'My Girl Bill' by Jim Stafford. It's a sly, snide, sniggery dig at homosexuality: you are given the impression that there's a scene going between the two guys, but the sell-out comes right at the end. They're both in love with the same woman, and 'She's my girl, Bill'. That's doubly sexist.

From time to time you may think that men are starting to sing about emancipated women, but no such luck. Family's 'Second Generation Woman' sounds like a real liberated lady at first (smokes like a man, getting higher than I can) but the final impression is still one of sexual exploitation: 'Knows when the time is right/Comes to you without a fight/She wants to/Looks good to handle from a personal angle' — he's onto a good thing there. Still, this is infinitely better stuff than 'Ms Grace' by the Tymes. Some astute hustler decided that here was another bandwagon, an unconventional idea to exploit. The song itself is distinguished only by the banality of its lyric and a pretty tune; it's just like all the other slick, so-called soul records of its kind. 'The minute I saw your face/I knew that I loved you'. Thanks for nothing.

There is a very different form of sexism, very subtle, hard to criticise because it is frequently of a very high poetic quality. Since Dylan revolutionised lyrics and set them to rock music there have been many songs in which women have been placed on a pedestal, in a way far removed from the inanity of 'Venus in Blue Jeans', for instance. Hendrix's 'Angel', an incredible love-song, gives no hint of what the real woman may be like; likewise songs like 'She's a Rainbow' (Stones), 'Tales of Brave Ulysses' (Cream), and even 'Pat's Song' by Country Joe (sorry Joe). This is a very beautiful song. Pat is portrayed as a kind of earth-goddess: 'She will fly on the wind/With her face to the sun/And children will dance/All around her for fun/Just ask her for love/And she'll give you some/For her smiles will colour the sky'. Dylan songs like 'Love Minus Zero/No Limit' (She knows too much to argue or to judge) and 'She Belongs to Me' (She's an artist, she don't look back — how *can* he be possessive about someone like that?) convey the same feeling of heightened awareness; they are, after all, products of the drug-culture. It seems churlish to criticise such mind-blowing gems of creativity, yet the sum total of their meaning can in no way help women to establish a realistic and satisfying role for themselves in society.



You're my picture
by Picasso...

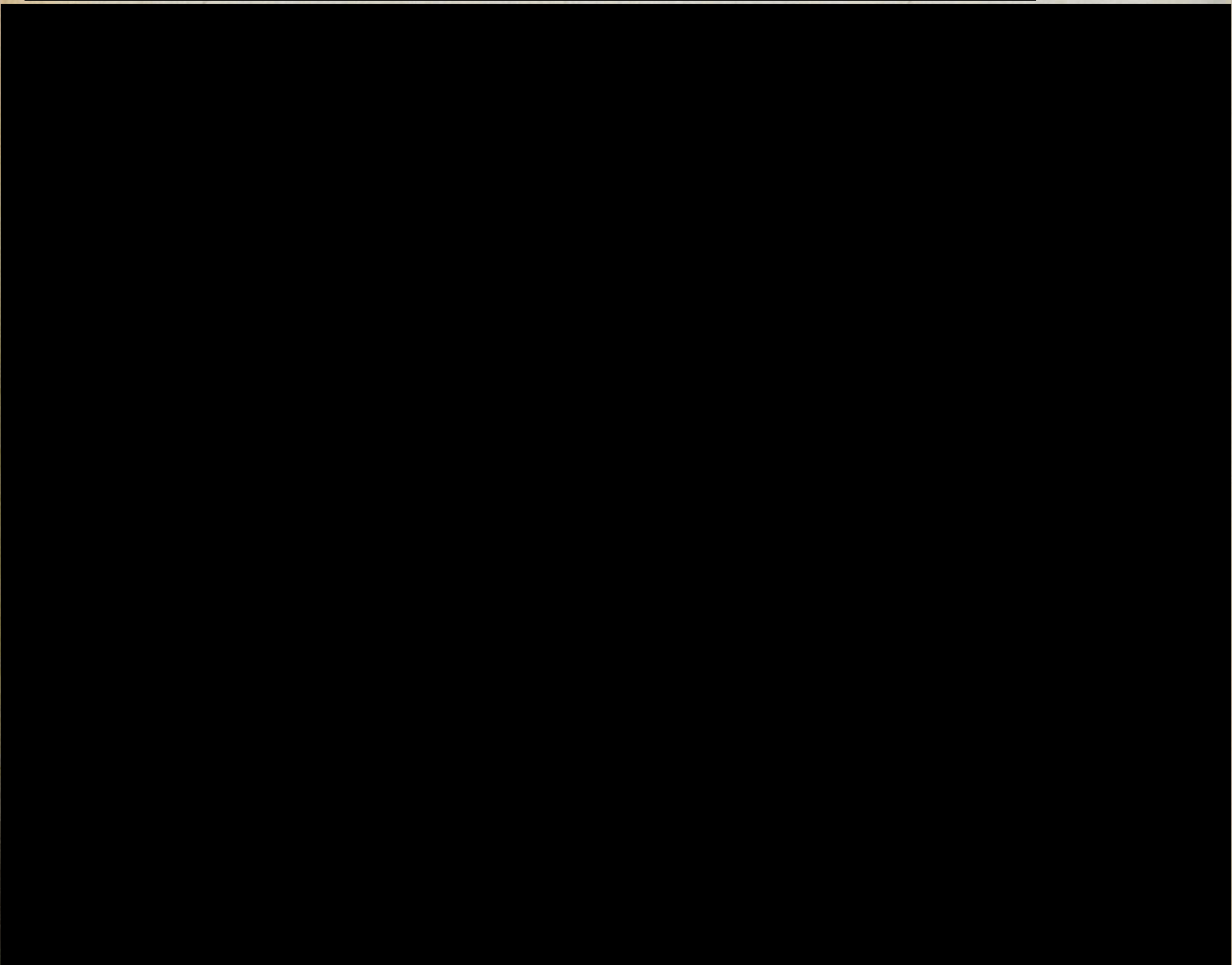
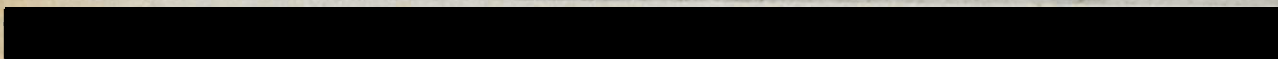
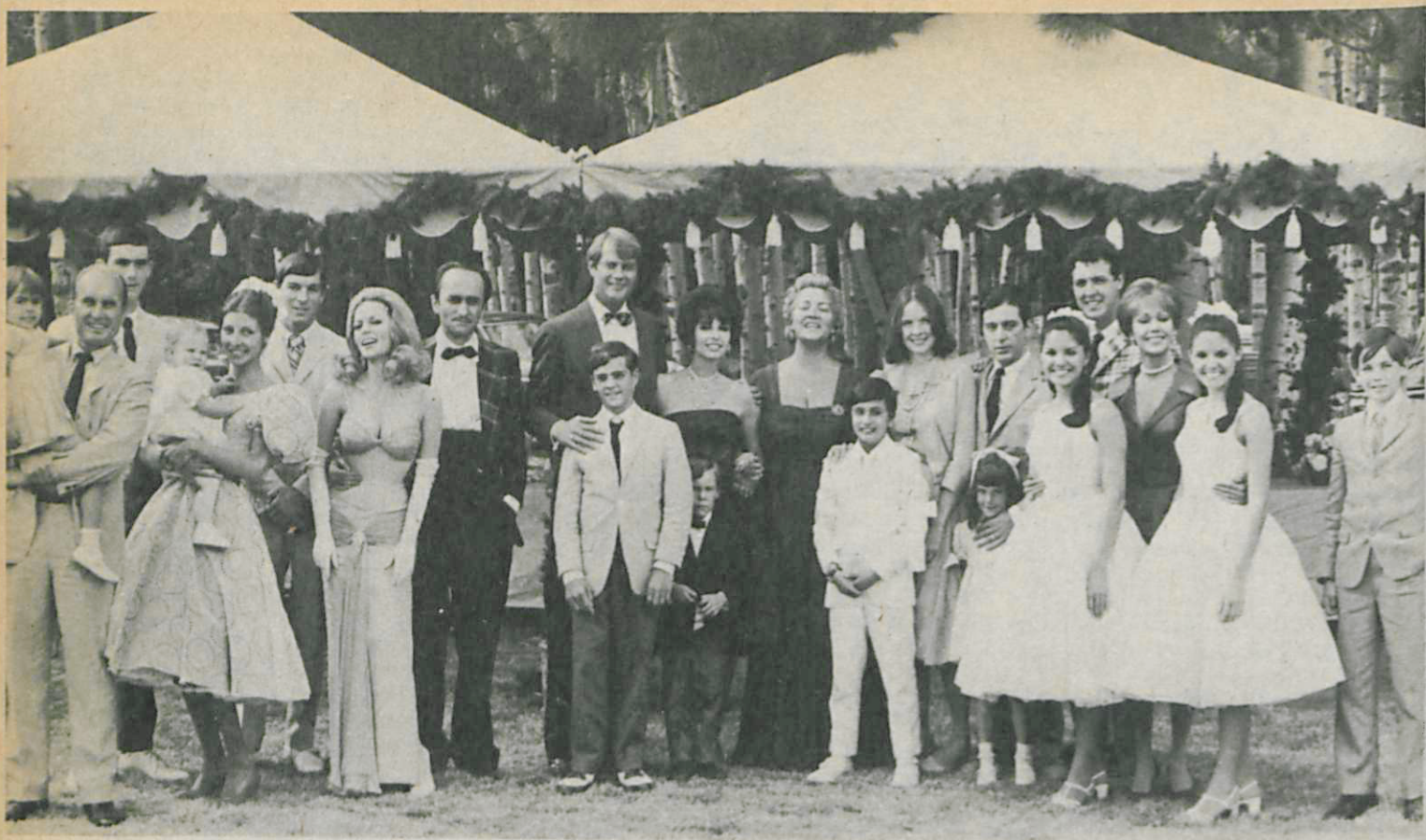
Mystification seeks to make its subject at once more *and less* than it really is; describing Angela Davis as a sweet black angel might be construed as a tribute, but it has little to do with what she really is — courageous, desperately determined, often tired, no doubt scared — in fact, it trivialises her and the ideals she stands for, though this was surely never intended. The trouble with all this unblemished beauty is that people who (like John Ruskin) have been led to expect too much perfection are sometimes disappointed by the real thing. And of course, if women aren't angels they're too often seen as Devils in Disguise.

It would be a distorted misrepresentation to claim that all rock lyrics are sexist; some don't tackle the problem at all, dealing with more cosmic matters (Yes, Hawkwind, Pink Floyd), others make a brave attempt to grapple and don't quite make it, and quite a lot of writers deal with women without really saying anything much — the Incredible String Band tend to do this. They're not really sexist, but they have never risked committing themselves either. Dylan succeeds with 'It ain't me, Baby' (a blow for men's rights!) also with his post-romantic material from *Blood on the Tracks*; Country Joe has been vociferously pro-feminist, Robert Wyatt writes humourously and intelligently about women, and the Jefferson Flying Corp. do all right too (Big Sister is watching you). Bowie comes nearer to it than anybody else with 'Janine'. Listen to it carefully: 'You're too intense/I'll have to keep you in your place'. But just for once, this isn't a subservient place — it's the separate place of a separate person. 'But if I catch you standing on my toes/I'll have a right to shout you down'. A remarkable song from a remarkable man. In addition, most of the Beatles' work together was notably free from sexism and gave us some memorable portraits: 'Lovely Rita, Meter Maid', 'Eleanor Rigby', 'Lady Madonna' (Baby at your breast/Wonder how you manage to feed the rest) and 'She's Leaving Home'. Lennon in particular has continued the tradition in his later writing. Even the Stones, high-priests of sexism, have given us an original rock use of images like

'Mother's Little Helper' and 'Spider and the Fly' and, most especially, something as sympathetic and mature as 'Angie': 'All the dreams we held so close/Seemed to all go up in smoke' — they've mutually exhausted what they had in common; he's saying goodbye without putting her down.

Some songs of great warmth and honesty are marred by their underlying assumptions. Dylan's 'Lay Lady Lay' suffers from the Sleeping Beauty Syndrome — 'Whatever colours you have in your mind/I'll show them to you/And you'll see them shine' — the idea that she has been waiting for him to come along and awaken her to love and enlightenment reinforces the image of woman as the passive sex. And Rod Stewart's 'Maggie May' betrays certain assumptions about 'the older woman' — 'You took me away from home/Just to save you from being alone'. A song which illustrates the chasm between the sexes is Bill Withers' 'Use Me'. His theme is the interdependence of the relationship: 'It ain't too bad/The way you use me/'Cos I sure am using you/To do the things you do'. He maintains his dignity throughout, but a woman singing this song would seem to be sacrificing and abasing herself to an embarrassing degree. So is this a sexist song? It's hard to imagine a woman convincingly adapting Hendrix's 'Lover Man': 'I'm a woman/Spelt with a capital W/All you big healthy men/Just stand in a line/I'm gonna make love to you baby/You just can't resist'. Maybe Mae West could get away with it — but then people think *she's* funny! It may not always work, but the Sexist Lyric Acid Test gives you a few laughs. I mean, can you imagine a woman singing 'Rag Daddy Rag/Where do you roam?/Rag Daddy Rag/Bring your skinny little body back home'? Or perhaps a tremulous young man dramatically declaiming (à la Dusty) 'You gotta choose the clothes you wear/Just for her/Do the things she likes to do/Wear your hair/Just for her...'. □







"Decide what you want, and then go all out to get it" Diane Ladd to Ellen Burstyn in *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*.

housewife, well-acted by Ellen Burstyn, and her son and how she tries to get her life going again after her husband is killed in a crash – an unusual subject for a commercial movie.

The film begins with Alice as a young girl. It is shot in a stagey setting with the sound of a romantic song being sung by a woman. The little Alice swears in strong language that she can sing better than that. Then we cut to the present – the current music is heavy, macho rock music and Alice is at a sewing-machine. However the film is a tragic-comedy so you are not allowed to dwell on reality for too long. Many times in the film just when you are feeling sympathetic the moment is reduced to laughter and the distance between the audience and the woman characters is reinforced.

Alice's husband is briefly shown as a Bad Husband and when Alice and her friend are dress-making and discussing men Alice says she could get on very well without men. Unless maybe it was Robert Redford. Then her husband is killed and the film sets out to prove that she can't get along without men, especially as she is an unsupported mother.

Housewife and son set out for Monterey – and Alice plans to make money as a singer, like she did twelve years ago before she married. She begins her attempt to get a job in Albuquerque and gets one after bursting into tears at the end of an unsuccessful day's searching. Eventually Alice is frightened out of town when her new, charming lover turns out to be a brutal wife-basher. In an all-too-real scene he threatens to break her jaw and then says he'll see her later, 'sweetheart'. It is one of several scenes which show men in a realistic, unpleasant light.

Alice journeys on to Tucson and has to settle for a job as a waitress. At first she doesn't like the waitress-owner who puts down men with the most amazingly crude language but their friendship grows in some of the best bits of the film. Their conversation when Alice is crying in the toilet is real and warm, meanwhile the cafe is in chaos without two of its women workers. Although the women give each other support the film can't keep men out and Alice falls, reluctantly, for a handsome customer (Kris Kristofferson – almost Robert Redford) who owns a ranch. Alice fights but eventually she and her son settle for Tucson

and the handsome lover. Alice never gets to Monterey. After all the film is written and directed by men and paid for by Hollywood – they have to have male saviours for their women or else where would *they* be? You can't expect them to challenge their own ideology.

Alfred, the son, is incredibly witty, he is an adorable, fun film character child, not the real kind we know, and his strange androgynous friend, Audrey, is fascinating. The whole film is romantic but with a hard edge. It deals realistically with the finance of love'n marriage – the difficulties of a single woman with a child, the lover's wife who admits she only wants her husband for his pay-cheque. The men's behaviour to women is realistically chauvinist too and, if you're like me, you'll enjoy seeing women putting them down – rarely seen on the screen! But, in a way, it is just like old movies where the heroine eventually finds her hero – a little wiser nowadays perhaps but it is the same old myth. Alice's lover declares publicly in the cafe that he'll give up the ranch and go with her to Monterey if she insists; but the last scene has Alice and her son deciding to stay in Tucson. It is an interesting, enjoyable film with situations you'll probably identify with except finally we have a slightly battered but happy ending – that's where films can't mirror life even if they wanted to – the life doesn't end with a roller of credits after *The Kiss*. □

Linda F. Dove

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Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More
Directed by Martin Scorsese
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Hollywood seems to have found new horizons – having temporarily exhausted all-male situations, disasters and horror it has turned to women's lives for a new subject. Having been forced into an awareness of women by the Women's Movement (there's even a women's group in Hollywood) the moguls are looking for ways to exploit us as a 'market', just as they sold black films like *Superfly* to newly race-conscious black people. The first of these new films about women (or is it the second? I haven't seen *Claudine*) is *Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More*. It is about a 32 year old

Travesties

By Tom Stoppard

(Faber, 95p.)

Performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company
Aldwych Theatre

The curtain rises on a library in Zurich. Three men work there, with three women in attendance. Their names are Tristan Tzara, a Rumanian Dadaist who is cutting up poems, shaking them in his hat and then drawing out a new poem at random; James Joyce, an Irish novelist who rolls words round his tongue for the sound and recites frivolous limericks; and Lenin, a Bolshevik in exile, working on a text called 'Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism'. It is 1917. Also in Zurich, but not yet on the stage is one Henry Carr, an elegant young member of the British Consulate, narcissistic to the knife edge of his trousers' crease.

Well. We learn from the programme notes, and from the published text of the play that only two of these 'real' people from history actually met: Joyce started a theatre company to present English plays to the Swiss, starting with Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in which Carr played Algy, to great local acclaim. But he and Joyce fell out over the matter of some elegant apparel Carr had purchased for his part, and for which Joyce refused to reimburse him.

In fact this slender but 'real' story is only the peg on which Stoppard hangs his dramatic hat, using the

words (written and remembered) of the other three, to concoct an intricate, witty series of episodes in which speeches from *Importance* and Shakespeare are also moulded with song, dance, music, punning, and even a whole scene of dialogue written in limerick form. A tour de force of stage expertise, produced and acted by the Royal Shakespeare Company. But what is Tom to us or we to Tom, that *Spare Rib* should give his play space?

Stoppard's work has always been particularly interesting because of the way in which he explores the aesthetic problems of the representation of reality. In this play it isn't only the fact that we watch a writer's imaginative resurrection of three men in history, making them meet and talk in a way they never did, but also that within the play particular episodes are played back, as in a film sequence, a number of times. This becomes both a device to provide us with information (on the progress of the 20th century history up to 1917) but also to show us that at each and every point a writer makes choices about what to say and how to say it. Stoppard's licence in his version of 'history' is a salutary reminder to look closely at other apparently truthful glimpses into the past via personal reminiscence. The whole of the play is ostensibly filtered through the ageing Carr's memory - 'The Lenin I knew', 'Lenin as I knew him', etc., in a parody (travesty?) of those memoirs squeezed out by the consumerist media from the most glancing acquaintance with the famous.

More profoundly, and with theoretical implications for the developments of feminist critiques of the relationship between art, society and politics, Stoppard's intention in bringing these three men together is revealed. They each represent a position in a continuing debate about art and society and the role of the artist which is the shifting centre of the play. Joyce is represented as taking the art for art's sake position, unconcerned with anything but his choice of the right word, his own artistic practice. Tzara presents the militant wing of Dada - a nihilist anti-art produced to challenge the nihilism of modern capitalism. Lenin is shown on the whole as representing a simple Party literature line, which sees all art in the service of socialism.

The question is whether Stoppard constructs an engaging debate, and who, if anyone, wins. The answer to this question lies not only in the arguments between characters or events in the play, but also in the play's structure, in how the different positions are arranged, and what effect this arrangement has on us, the audience.

In the first scene, a kind of prologue scene, the three men are presented with equality: they all speak a nonsense of some kind - non-grammatical (English grammar) and therefore nonsense. Tzara cuts up a poem, Joyce plays with word sounds, and Lenin, when his wife Nadya rushes in to tell him about the revolution in Russian, answers eagerly 'Da da da', ('yes' in Russian). As far as we, the English speaking audience are concerned, the Russian is as much nonsense as the other 'nonsense' - in Lenin's words, it is all 'Da da', which, as Tzara later explains in his chats with Carr and Joyce, means 'nonsense'. The three activities which the men are engaged in are thus also given equal (and nonsense) weight. There is no apparent aesthetic difference between cutting up a poem, and writing a theoretical text on imperialism.

From here on, Stoppard operates a kind of artistic apartheid: Lenin himself never comes in contact with the other men. Carr, Tzara and Joyce function in a dramatic style which is opposed against that of Lenin. In the first Act there is a witty but seriously engaging discussion between Tzara and Carr, and later Tzara and Joyce, all around the relationship of the artist to society. Tzara, as the most militant of the three, tells us that Lenin sees the role of literature as subordinate to and in the service of the class struggle. For Tzara this supreme hypocrisy especially since Lenin is mad about Beethoven who could hardly be described as a member of the working class. He says 'As a Dadaist myself I am the natural ally of the political left', but he also castigates the political left, saying '... the further left you go politically, the more bourgeois they like their art'. Tzara's whole style and manner, his clothes, his lounging song and dancing elegance, all fit neatly into the British consular environment. His mischievous nihilism meets Carr's elegantly decadent British Empire in a flood of

repartee, and Lenin's arguments don't stand a chance, especially since he's not there to put them.

The other two characters who do represent Marxism marginally more than Tzara, are Bennett, Carr's manservant (a radical member of the lower orders) and Cecily, the librarian who helps Lenin with his footnotes to 'Imperialism'. The first hardly appears, and the second is a slippery young girl, charmingly and somewhat coyly parroting stuff about revisionism and economism. It is clear that her grasp on the ideas that come out of her pretty little mouth are not to be taken too seriously.

Lenin and Nadya relate their views on art in the service of socialism, and Lenin reproduces a long speech made in 1905 on the freedom of expression which would follow on from social ownership of the press. This section is dense, and demands the kind of close concentration one gives to an illustrated lecture - which is effectively the way Stoppard has chosen to present Lenin and his ideas.

Lenin's ideas are offered in a speechifying form, rather than the seductiveness of the other writers, and the mood becomes polemical. One might argue that this 'straight' presentation of Lenin derives from respect for his views, but the problem is that this style has to contend with breaking the established and dominant entertaining mood of the play; the structural apartheid dictates that Lenin's arguments are never integrally a challenge to the others. Either Stoppard thinks they are no real challenge, or that by implication the challenge is so great that he can only present the argument to us at a distance. Whichever it is, the dominant mood remains that of satire, wit and elegance, conveying palatable exercises of the intellect, against which Lenin and his views appear as heavy as ballast, there almost as much to provide dramatic balance as for their own sake. The play ends with old Carr and old Cecily, whom he married, giving us a snippet of their old age - Carr continuing to dream about the good old famous days, Cecily matter of factly reminding him that he never knew any of these people.

We are reminded that it was entertainment, sleight of mind, mouth and foot. And even though there is no explicit message put across to us, the play's style and structure spell the message out: the status quo is maintained after a display of technical brilliance in which no real challenge to bourgeois art has been made. If anything, Tzara wins on points, since Stoppard takes some of his cues from Dada - as Carr says 'It may be nonsense but at least it's clever nonsense'. The cleverness lies in the way Stoppard can put his finger on real social and theoretical questions, and present them with some considerable scholarly fidelity. But he can only play with the possibility of exploring them seriously, capitulating to the seduction of his own artist characters. The debate is never engaged; was that too a travesty?

Micheline Wandor

THE WOMAN'S HANDBOOK

a sane and practical guide for the modern woman - whether married, separated, divorced or widowed -

Eva Wilson (editor)

- contributors -

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June Rose - Social Welfare; Directory of Useful Addresses and Information

Jennifer Levin - Women and the Law

Margaret Rix - Financial Management

Margaret Stone - Pensions

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by **New English Library** (65p).

Secker & Warburg/New English Library

Kid's Books

Some non-sexist little books for children

A book's size may not seem to be its most important feature, yet in terms of young children's autonomy, little books can make a big difference. Over the past decade a growing number of little picture book series for little children have come out. Many of them being of Swedish origin, Sweden's liberal approach to sex-roles and family arrangements is sometimes reflected. Especially successful in communicating this

"Ears next," says the Doctor, and she peers first into one ear and then into the other.



The *Thomas* series by Gunilla Wolde. Brockhampton/Hodder & Stoughton. Thomas is different. Thomas bakes a cake. Thomas goes out. Thomas builds a house. Thomas and Sarah dress up. Thomas and his cat. Thomas goes to the doctor. Thomas has a bath. Thomas tidies his room. Thomas is little.

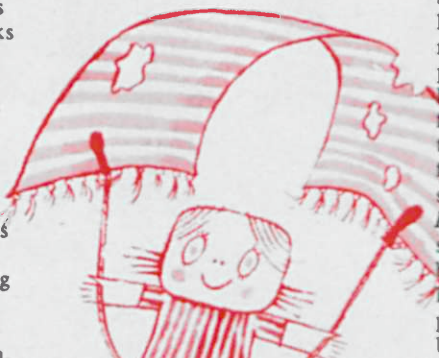
aspect of social change and conveying freedom of choice for both boys and girls are the two excellent series by Gunilla Wolde, the *Thomas* books and the *Emma* books. The *Thomas* series is about a little boy involved in everyday activities. Whether he is taking a bath, dressing up with his friend Sarah or baking a cake, he is consistently depicted as a real child without resorting to tiresome male stereotypes. Wolde's drawings in this series as well as in the *Emma* books are full of expression and captivating vibrance.

"Thomas is different" confronts the sex-differentiation issue head on. Thomas and Sarah find out together how similar they are in looks and dress. Inside a tent which they equally participated in setting up, they take off their shirts, still noting that they look alike. Then shorts off, they go for a naked romp in the sunshine. So how is Thomas different? Where he has a penis, Sarah has a "little slit" — certainly it would have been more consistent to call it a vagina. They both pee in the grass, then decide to play mummy and daddy. Here the story is sadly marred because Wolde (or her translator) assumes that Thomas and Sarah will grow up respectively to be a daddy and a mummy, living in heterosexual harmony. These assumptions appear altogether too often in children's books.

The leading character in Wolde's

other highly satisfying series is Emma, a spunky and active little girl. As in the *Thomas* series, the adults in Emma's world are shown in unusually non-stereotyped roles. The doctors in "Emma and the measles" and in "Thomas goes to the doctor" are women, and fathers help in domestic chores, especially in caring for the children. In "Thomas bakes a cake" it is his father who helps him with the oven; Emma's father is the one who takes her out in "Emma goes to the dentist" — although in this case the dentist is a man and his dental assistant is a woman. "Emma quite contrary" is another enjoyable story. Emma on most days brushes her hair, puts her clothes on properly, plays nicely with her baby brother etc. Then on her 'contrary' days, she musses up her hair, puts her trousers on her head, makes her brother cry, etc. This can be read with a refreshing minimum of moralising and has some funny illustrations.

Also from Sweden, the *Anna* series by Inger and Lasse Sandberg, features another little girl. Anna's companion and baby-sitter is her tall uncle "who is so tall that he does not fit into (the) page". The series soon gets the reader involved — we are left to fill in an occasional word or so from picture hints. One instance in which this answer finding turns out badly though, is in the book "What Anna saw". Here again, children are subjected to the inevitability of parenthood syndrome, for we see a woman and a man whom the book later labels as a mother and father. Anna doesn't always come across as self-reliant but in "Anna's mother has a birthday" and "What Anna saved", she is a capable individual, creating under her own initiative. In "Anna's mother has a



The *Anna* series by Inger and Lasse Sandberg. Richard Sadler. Anna's mother has a birthday. What Anna saved. What Anna saw. When Anna had a cold. Anna and the magic hat.

birthday", she has no money to buy her mother a birthday present, so she decides to make a pie, which she lavishes with whipped cream, meringue, bananas and strawberries. "What Anna saved", shows her collecting old pieces of wood, wheels, nails and such which she uses to build lots of playthings, including an aeroplane that she flies away in, with a push from her tall uncle. In fact when these two books are read in conjunction with "Thomas bakes a cake" and "Thomas builds a house",



J Burningham, Blanket

the non-sexist message is really effective. Here we have in four little books a boy baking ("Thomas bakes a cake"), a girl constructing an aeroplane ("What Anna saved"), a girl baking ("Anna's mother has a birthday") and a boy building a house ("Thomas builds a house"). Thus children of both sexes engage in very similar activities that in children's literature are usually restricted to one sex or the other.

Other little picture book series by the Sandbergs are the *Kate* and *Daniel* books. Kate is really Anna, but under a new publisher and translator. The *Kate* books have a bit more zip and rhythm as best exemplified by "Kate, Kate, come and help" and the reader involvement found in the *Anna* books is still there. Like Anna, Kate is an active female character and in general her series has more going for it than the *Daniel* books, which are blatantly sexist. Daniel is seen only in typical boyhood activities, and worse yet, his mother who seems to be the only person in his life, always wears the boringly ubiquitous apron of women in picture books.

Two more little picture book series originating in Sweden are the *Elsa* books by Anna Virin and the *Oh, look* books. The *Oh, look* books, intended for even younger children than the others reviewed so far, are by several different authors and illustrators. For the most part they are dull and simplistic. Ilon Wikland's well-intentioned "John can help" is the most useful in that it shows a boy helping with household work such as sewing and baking. But the same idea can surely be expressed in a more imaginative, less didactic style. The *Elsa* books are tedious stories featuring a young girl and her teddy bears playing at cleaning up her room.

Recent little books for little children don't all come from Scandi-

navia. Here in Britain John Burningham has written and illustrated a series called *Little Books*. Unfortunately his books fail to take the opportunity of challenging the traditional generalisations found in children's stories. The protagonist is the cute little boy type and his parents fulfil their stereotyped functions. Even so, the stories are warmly alive, particularly "The blanket" and "The dog", and all are witty and nicely illustrated.

The *Thomas*, *Emma*, *Anna*, *Kate*, *Daniel*, *Oh, look*, *Elsa* and Burningham's *Little Books* provide an extensive, if uneven, choice of easy-to-handle books for the very young. But even the best of these series contain some serious omissions. Most conspicuously, there is throughout an almost total absence of black and other minority characters. Nor do any of the books expose children to anything much outside the sheltered nuclear family goings-on. But it is a noteworthy beginning when sex-role stereotypes break down in books that small children can literally get their hands on. □

Madeleine Landauer
Children's Rights Workshop

The *Emma* series by Gunilla Wolde. Brockhampton/Hodder & Stoughton. Emma quite contrary. Emma and the measles. Emma's baby brother. Emma goes to the dentist.

The *Kate* series by Inger and Lasse Sandberg. A. & C. Black. Kate, Kate, come and help. Kate's upside-down day. Kate's bouncy ball. Kate's Christmas present.

The *Daniel* series by Inger and Lasse Sandberg. A. & C. Black. Daniel's helping hand. Daniel's mysterious monster. Daniel paints a picture. Daniel and the coconut cakes.

The *Elsa* series by Anna Virin. Brockhampton. Elsa's bears. Elsa tidies her house.

The *Little Books* series by John Burningham. Cape. The baby. The rabbit. The school. The snow. The dog. The blanket. The friend. The cupboard.



The *Oh, look* series. Dent. John can help by Ilon Wikland. What I can do by Ilon Wikland. Mia's doll by Per Beckman. What Tina can do by Thea Bank Jensen.

HOW TO GET AN ABORTION

What are the options now open to a woman who suspects she's pregnant? *The Essex Road London women's health group* have been investigating how to obtain an abortion and the methods available in this country. They have written a step by step guide but emphasise that each woman's experience will differ according to the support she receives or the opposition she faces from the doctors she deals with. Abortion was merely legalised in 1967, not made easy. And, of course, though it may be difficult to obtain a National Health Service abortion today, if the Abortion Amendment Bill passes, it will become practically impossible.

How to find out if you are pregnant

The earlier in pregnancy that you have an abortion, the safer and easier it is, so if there is any chance you may be pregnant it is important to find out as soon as possible. A pregnancy test isn't usually reliable until your period is at least two weeks late (which is called 6 weeks pregnant — the length of a pregnancy is always worked out from the first day of the last period). Most pregnancy tests require a sample of urine from your first piss of the morning, as this is the most concentrated.

Where to get a pregnancy test

1. Most G.P.s do them, usually by sending a urine sample to the local hospital, which may take up to a week for the results to come through. Some G.P.s will do them immediately at their surgery where you can get the result straight away. G.P.s may prescribe pills to "bring on" a period. The most common are *Primados* and *Amenorone Forte*. These are used as a form of pregnancy testing since using them brings on a period if you are *not* pregnant — there is no question of them bringing on a miscarriage. There is a high risk that they will damage the foetus if you are pregnant and the Committee on Safety of Medicines has issued a statement saying that they should not be continued as a way of pregnancy testing because of the risks of foetal damage.

Don't use them unless you are positive that you want an abortion. They are also used to bring on periods for women with amenorrhea but make sure you have a urine test to ensure you are not pregnant before taking them.

2. A few women's centres throughout the country are now doing tests on the spot and you get the results instantly. The Women's Liberation Workshop at 38 Earlham Street, London, WC2 Tel: 01 836 6081 has lists of women's centres. These tests can be done at cost price of 20p.

3. Chemists sell individual kits for women to do their own tests. It costs about £3.00 for one test.

4. Pregnancy Advisory in London will do an immediate pregnancy test of £1.00 and also give advice. British Pregnancy Advisory Service in Birmingham, Brighton, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester will do testing for free.

How to get an abortion

If you are under 16 you still officially need your parents consent, as you would for any other operation. If you want an abortion and are under 16 it is probably worth getting advice from a Youth Advisory Clinic or the Charity Clinics if there is one in your town. In London there are two which can help and advise you.

Youth Advisory Centres: 31 Nottingham Place, London, W1
Tel: 01 935 1219
26 Prince of Wales Road, London, N5
Tel: 01 267 4792

If you are married some gynaecologists may ask for your husband's consent though this is not needed by law.

Unless the Abortion Amendment Bill goes through (when it will be virtually impossible for many women to get an abortion) there are three ways to try to get an abortion:

1. National Health Service

Provides free abortions for some women. The NHS perform only about half the abortions carried out on British women, the rest are done in private or charity clinics. Most foreign women obtain abortions through private or charity clinics since it is often difficult for them to obtain abortions on the NHS, although it is legal to carry out abortions on foreign women for the same reasons as British women.

First you need a letter from a GP to a gynaecologist in a hospital saying that they *feel* you need an abortion. If your usual GP won't help you can either register with a different GP in your area (you have to take your medical card to your usual GP for her/him to sign saying that they don't mind you transferring. You don't have to tell them why you want to change), or if you have friends in a different

area who know a GP in that area who is sympathetic to abortions, you can register with her/him as a temporary resident while you are staying at your friend's address.

Once you have got the referral from the GP, you have to make a hospital appointment. You may have to wait a few days to a few months for this — if by the time you get to the hospital you are more than about 12 weeks pregnant they may say it is too late to do an abortion. The gynaecologist may do an abortion on everyone who wants one, or on no-one, or on some. It is entirely their personal choice. So unless you know that the one you are seeing is always helpful it is worth putting the case as strongly as you can.

Tell them you're really depressed and if you've had any psychiatric trouble in the past, and if your social circumstances are bad (no money, no home, no husband — they think that is bad), or if your studies and career are threatened. It often helps to take a friend along for moral support. You may have to sit around waiting for a long time, and you may/may not get some heavy emotional things thrown at you, which can be pretty demoralising when you are already feeling vulnerable.

Four legal reasons for termination, as on the "green form" which has to be signed by 2 doctors before an abortion is done:

(1) *The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.*

(2) *The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.*

(3) *The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the existing child(ren) of the family of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.*

(4) *There is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.*

In deciding whether the mental or physical health of the mother or existing children are risked by the pregnancy, doctors may take present or foreseeable future environment into account.

The clause allowing doctors to consider a woman's environment before agreeing to an abortion now permits a doctor to, for example, carry out an abortion where housing conditions are poor, the family large, or the mother's career at risk. It has come to be known as the "social clause" of the Act, but it is important to realise that it is only an aid to interpreting the main grounds for abortion, which are (1), (2) and (3).

Most gynaecologists expect you to be apologetic and respectful rather than demanding your rights — they make up the rules of the game, not you. If the gynaecologist refuses, you can ask your GP to refer you to another. Once the gynaecologist has agreed to do the abortion, you usually go into hospital from a few days to a week later — usually for 2 or 3 nights.

Depending on your GP and where you live, you may or may not have some choice about which hospital you go to. Most (not quite all) London hospitals have rigid catchment areas for abortion, unless you live in their catchment area you won't usually get an appointment.

2. Charitable Trusts who perform abortions

Pregnancy Advisory Service, 40 Margaret Street, London W1
Tel: 01 409 0284

British Pregnancy Advisory Service, which has branches in Leeds (0532 443861), Liverpool (051 227 3721), Manchester (061 236 7777) and Coventry. It has sub-branches in Tipton, Worley, Bedford, Bournemouth, Trowbridge and are opening new branches soon in Sheffield and Chester.

PAS and BPAS are completely independent of each other, but are run on very similar lines. They both have a fund from which they can, if necessary, give grants or loans to people in severe financial difficulties. They both have women counsellors who discuss the abortion with every woman they see — whether she really wants it, what the alternatives are, what it involves etc.

You do not need your doctor's letter to go to either of them, but they like to inform your GP — unless you don't want them to. At both of them you will be seen first by a doctor and a counsellor, examined and given tests. Then you are sent to a gynaecologist a day or so later for a routine examination (internal pelvic examination), then you go to a nursing home a few days later for an abortion, usually spending a day and a night there. BPAS have nursing homes in Brighton, Leamington and Liverpool. PAS have nursing ▶

homes in London.

You usually wait a few days to a week for the first appointment with them (which is often less than you wait for an NHS appointment), so if your pregnancy is quite late it may be best to go straight away to one of them. They never refuse an abortion to anyone who wants one providing there are no strong medical reasons for refusing. Don't forget that both do on the spot pregnancy tests without prior appointment.

Costs: BPAS charge £10.00 for the initial examination, tests etc. and £56.00 for the operation (slightly more if the pregnancy is advanced, i.e. more than 10 to 12 weeks). They will see anyone from anywhere in or outside the country.

London PAS charge £7.50 for the initial consultation and £60.00 for the operation. They have a branch which deals mostly with women from abroad, you can contact them through the central office. They charge slightly more, but try to arrange for the whole procedure (making of the initial appointment to the operation) to take only a few days. British women can go to this branch if necessary.

London PAS seem to be very careful and competent medically and pleasant to people. As far as we know, this also applies to BPAS.

3. Private (commercial) nursing homes

For these you don't need a referral from your GP and it will probably take only a few days to get the abortion. You may or may not stay in the nursing home for a night or two. Prices vary considerably, but are usually much more than BPAS or PAS, for example £100 to £200. They are making a profit out of women in quite a nasty way and are generally not recommended. Although they are controlled by the government, medical standards vary considerably.

It may be worth trying several of these ways at the same time if you want an abortion. For example, you can make an appointment at one of the charitable places for a day or two after an NHS hospital appointment in case you are unlucky with the NHS gynaecologist.

Methods of abortion

Morning after pill:

As far as we know there is no safe and effective pill that can be taken after intercourse to stop a pregnancy. Various methods are being tried, but they are still at the experimental stage. (Taking a large number of contraceptive pills at once does not work and is bad for you).

Menstrual extraction:

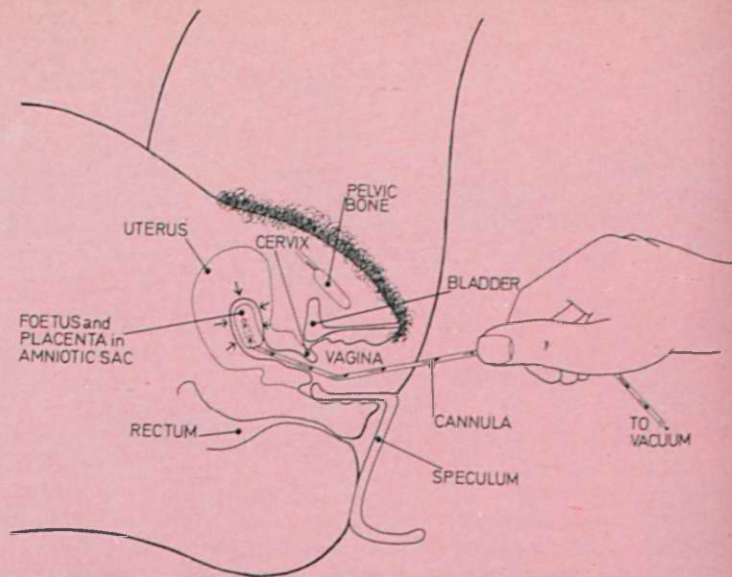
This method has and is being used by women in the USA to help with painful periods, and may also be used as a very early abortion method. The aim is to reduce painful periods by extracting all the menstrual flow in one go. The contents of the womb are extracted in the first or second day of the period by inserting a narrow flexible tube (cannula) into the womb through the cervix. The cannula is connected to a tube which is attached to a jar where a vacuum is created and the contents of the womb are sucked out. With menstrual extractions and very early vacuum abortions there is no need to dilate the cervix as a narrow cannula can be used. There is a valve which prevents any air being forced into the womb by mistake. No anaesthetic is used, and the method is practised by women in women's groups in the USA without the presence of a doctor or in a clinic.

If the period is only a few days overdue, the same method may be used and can result in an abortion if the woman is pregnant. However, it is almost impossible to know whether the woman is pregnant or not since pregnancy tests do not show up at this early stage.

It is important to say that this method is used between women in women's groups who trust and care for each other. Although they are not trained doctors, they take great care with each other's bodies recognising that the methods can be dangerous unless it is done with knowledge and the correct, clean equipment. They are prepared to use the method on themselves and are not using other women as guinea pigs. If done properly this can be a safe method for an early abortion but it is not in general use in Britain.

Vacuum Abortion:

In Britain a vacuum abortion is the method commonly used up to approximately the first 12 to 14 weeks of pregnancy. 82% of all



abortions are now done in the first 13 weeks (1973). In this procedure the contents of the womb are sucked out by inserting either a plastic or a metal tube (cannula) through the cervix into the womb. The cannula is attached to a tube which is connected to a machine that creates a vacuum (vacuum aspirator). See diagram. Menstrual extraction is done without an aspirator.

Many gynaecologists often use a curette to gently scrape the walls of the womb after the cannula has been withdrawn to ensure all the contents of the womb have been removed.

Vacuum abortions can be carried out in out-patient clinics as well as within hospitals. The method used is basically the same but usually only a local anaesthetic is used in out-patients. The whole abortion is quick and takes from 10 to 15 minutes. Different gynaecologists use slightly different methods but this is a rough guide. Only some hospitals perform out-patient abortions, the advantage is that there is no need to spend any nights in hospital. However, you are conscious throughout the proceedings and may suffer some pain and cramps.

You lie down and the doctor will probably do a manual examination to check the position of the womb. You may or may not be given valium or a similar tranquilliser beforehand. A speculum is inserted and your cervix will be grasped with a tenaculum to hold it steady. A local anaesthetic such as xylocaine is often injected into your cervix at two points. These do not block all sensations of pain and you may feel cramp like pains.

The cervix is then opened slowly using dilators until it is large enough to take the cannula, you may feel cramps during the dilation. The cannula is inserted and the contents of the womb gently sucked out. The width of dilation depends on how far pregnant you are, or as in one case we heard of it is dependent on the size of cannula that they had ready at the time. The whole procedure should not take more than about 10 minutes. The doctor may also gently scrape the womb with a curette to make sure that everything has been removed.

It all may be a bit painful, but women who have had it often feel

that the unpleasantness is worth it to avoid a general anaesthetic and a stay in hospital. You may take half an hour to recover before going home. It is important to keep the day free for resting and taking it easy, and it is a good idea to have a friend with you to give you support before and after. She will probably not be allowed to stay in for the operation, but it is worth asking.

In-Patient Abortions:

These usually involve two to three nights stay in hospital. The method used is similar except that a general anaesthetic is used, and possibly a local cervical relaxant as well. Only a mild general anaesthetic is used for an abortion and you are unconscious for 10 to 15 minutes only. If gas is used, it is after you are put to sleep with an injection and the anaesthetic still only lasts 10 to 15 minutes. The advantages of an in-patient abortion are that you are unconscious while the operation is going on and feel no pain. The disadvantages are the length of stay in hospital. The attendant risks of general anaesthetics are very low with an anaesthetic as short and light as this.

It is important for both in-patient and out-patient abortions that the doctor is told of your previous medical history, any drugs

that you may have taken recently and of any allergies you may have to anaesthetics or other drugs.

Methods of Later Abortions

None of the following methods are as safe as the above, so it is important to get an abortion as soon as possible. Nevertheless, abortion still involves less risk of mortality than does childbirth, and early abortions involve even less risk than later ones.

After 12 weeks the foetus and placenta have grown large, it is more difficult to remove them by suction and there is more danger of haemorrhage. The walls of the uterus have grown softer and are more easily damaged if a cannula is used, so different methods are practiced. Again these vary according to the skills and preferences of the doctor and hospital involved.

The most common methods used after 12 weeks by the NHS are a hysterotomy, or a saline abortion. However, in the two nursing homes in London used by the PAS, another method is used from the 12th to 18th week of pregnancy — the Dilation and Evacuation. They use vacuum abortion up to the 12th week.

Dilation and Evacuation:

This usually involves a general anaesthetic and a local injection may be used into the cervix to relax the walls of the cervix, so that it can be dilated without any damage.

The entrance of the cervix is dilated and the contents of the womb are removed using forceps. The uterus is curetted (scraped) gently afterwards. This operation may take from 10 to 30 minutes but you are unconscious throughout. The clinics who use the method do so because they feel it is more satisfactory, and because doing it often they are very skilled at it.

Saline abortions:

These are generally performed after the 16th week of pregnancy, and not before. A saline abortion is performed by replacing some of the fluid around the embryo with saline (salt) solution. This makes the womb start contracting from 5 to 50 hours later and after several hours the fetal and placental tissue is pushed through the cervix and vagina. In effect the saline abortion is an induced miscarriage. Sometimes prostaglandins (hormone) or hypertonic may be used instead of saline. We don't know enough about these methods to comment on them.

A patch on your stomach is anaesthetised and a needle is pushed through the skin, muscle and uterine wall into the fluid surrounding the foetus (amniotic fluid). Some of the fluid is drawn out and salt solution is injected in. After a few hours the uterus starts to contract and you may feel cramps and some pain. Gradually the waters break and the fetal and placental tissue are pushed out. On average the abortion takes 28 hours. Sometimes hormones are given to speed up contractions, and pain killers are usually given.

The saline abortion is a long, possibly painful process which is often hard and emotionally draining for the woman. Pain can be reduced by doing the same relaxation and breathing techniques used for childbirth.

Although this is a difficult method of abortion it still may be a great relief to many women who do not want a child they cannot love or support financially. These methods will continue to be important until the whole moralistic attitude to abortion changes so that women can get them easily when they want them at the earliest opportunity without fear or guilt.

Prostaglandins:

Hormones called prostaglandins may be given to induce a miscarriage.

Hysterotomy:

This may be done after 12 to 14 weeks of pregnancy and up until the legal limit of 28 weeks. It is probably the most common method of later abortion used within the NHS. It is occasionally used in private clinics.

Procedure is the same as for a Caesarian section. It involves a full anaesthetic for probably ½ to 1 hour, and a stay in hospital for a week or two.

The surgeon makes a cut in the lower abdominal wall, and then into the uterus. The fetal and placental tissue are removed by hand and the cuts in the uterus and abdominal wall are then stitched up.

The advantages are that the surgeon can be sure of removing everything from inside the uterus and bleeding can be easily con-

trolled at the time. It is easy to do a sterilisation at the same time if the woman wants one (though some gynaecologists use this to put pressure on a woman they think should be sterilised, refusing to do an abortion unless she agrees to be sterilised).

The disadvantage is that it is a fairly major operation with the same risks involved as other surgery, e.g. from anaesthetics, or from complications like wound infection or kidney infection. Probably the biggest disadvantage is that the woman is left with a scar on the uterus which may be a potential weakness in later pregnancies. It may mean that the woman will have to have future babies delivered by Caesarian. If the operation is combined with sterilisation, the of course this does not matter.

Although this is quite a major procedure, it is probably safer, more efficient and pleasanter than a saline abortion.

What to expect after an abortion

1. You may get stomach cramps for a day or two.
2. It is quite likely that you will bleed a little on and off for a week or two afterwards. The bleeding should not be heavier than a period. If it is and you are feeling a lot of pain you should go back to the hospital or your GP. It may mean that some of the contents of the womb (retained products of conception) have remained. To remove these the gynaecologist will have to do a gentle scrape, using a general anaesthetic, to remove them.
3. A discharge, temperature and pain in the lower abdomen suggests there is a likelihood of infection. It may be accompanied with or without bleeding. You may have an infection in the tubes or uterus. This could be due to retained products in the womb in which case it will be treated with a scrape. If it is not due to this the doctor may give you a course of antibiotics to treat it.

It is important to go back to your doctor if you do get some of these symptoms because if it is not treated it could result in permanent damage which might leave you sterile. Again the risks of this are low after an abortion.

What to do after an abortion

Most doctors recommend that you should not have sexual intercourse from two weeks to a month (opinions differ). The reason for this is the possibility of infection. The entrance to the cervix may not have got narrower and there may be odd bits of blood and tissue left in the uterus which are an ideal environment for infection. You can become pregnant straight away after an abortion so you should not have intercourse without using contraception.

Contraception:

Some gynaecologists will put a coil in at the same time as the abortion, particularly if they feel you are likely to be "unreliable" and take risks. It would seem that there is more likelihood of infection by fitting it straight away, but on the other hand it saves you getting it done later. One girl came to us who had been refused an abortion at an NHS hospital because she did not want a coil to be put in at the same time. She was prepared to use other contraception. The pill can be started straight away or you can wait until your first period starts after the abortion. Again, opinions vary.

It is a good idea not to use tampons for a few weeks after since these again increase the chances of an infection.

We want the situation changed so that a safe abortion is readily and easily available to all women on the NHS. No woman should be forced to have a child unless she wants one. □

Other addresses for help and advice on abortions:

Release, 1 Elgin Avenue, London W9 Tel: 01 289 1123

Brook Advisory Centre, 233 Tottenham Court Road, London, W1
Tel: 01 580 2991

Marie Stopes Clinic, 108 Whitfield Street, London W1
Tel: 01 588 0662

Useful books and pamphlets:

Our Bodies Our Selves, Boston Women's Health collective, £1.50 (highly recommended)

Birth Control Handbook, Montreal Health Press, PO Box 1000, Station G, Montreal, Quebec H2W2N1, Canada. £0.08

Both are obtainable from Rising Free Bookshop, 197 Kings Cross Road, London N1 and Compendium, 240 Camden High Street, London NW1 and Grass Roots, 109 Oxford Road, Manchester



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